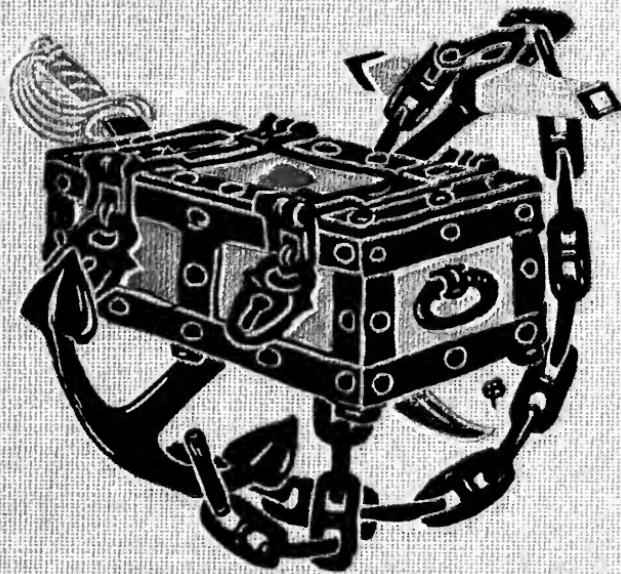


PRISONERS OF FORTUNE



RUEL • PERLEY • SMITH

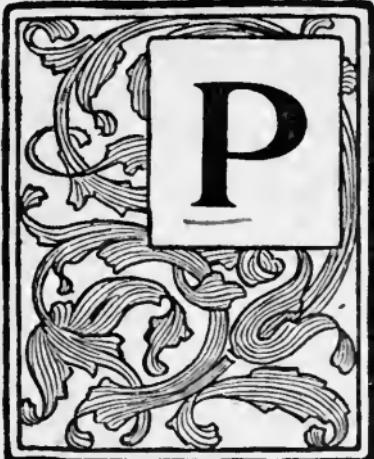




*"HE BARED A GREAT, SINEWY ARM,
WITH A KNIFE CLENCHED IN THE HAND."*

(See page 213)





RISONERS OF FORTUNE

*A Tale of the Massa-
chusetts Bay Colony*

By RUEL PERLEY SMITH

With a Frontispiece by FRANK T. MERRILL



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P5
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First Impression, January, 1907

COLONIAL PRESS
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, U. S. A.

TO
Ellen M. Cyr Smith
WITH HER HUSBAND'S LOVE

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Prisoners of Fortune

CHAPTER I

PLAY PIRATES, AND REAL

ON this day, the 10th of August in the year of grace 1757, it being my sixtieth birthday — and a hot and sticky one — and the flies bothering me so that there was no comfort in dozing in my chair, after my light noon meal of pork and beans and cheese and meat pie, with a mug of cider and a pipe thereafter, I sat up of a sudden, to slap and to light my pipe over again; and thereupon formed, on the spur of the moment, an extraordinary resolution. Now I am fond of cogitating over the curious relation that events of importance in our lives bear to small and even silly ones, and how the lesser may be progenitor of the greater; and so I have often wondered since how much the biting of the flies had to do with the formation of this resolution.

But certain it is, that I sat up suddenly and, being an active man, for one who has been active so long, — and that, too, upon the tiring seas, — I lay in wait for one

most persistent and pestiferous fly, and slew him with a flirt of my red cotton handkerchief.

“ And so,” said I, suddenly aloud, philosophizing over the fly, as profound men are wont to do over little things, “ shall I one day be whisked away from the scene of my own buzzings and botherings; and what shall there be left in the minds and memories of my children and grandchildren for a picture and a remembrance of me, other than an idle chattering of bygone times, with the same big chair ever set for me by the hearth, and the sound of my cane pegging along the streets? ”

So, my dear son, I made quickly then and there this resolution, to wit: to spend the next ten years of my life in setting down for you and your children the many strange events of my life for fifty odd years aback; so it may stand for you and them to read, that I was, even as you, a man active and strong and full of bold enterprisings, and how I have had my share of dangerous adventure on land and sea, among wreckers and swarthy pirates.

As for these ten years in which I promise to be busy — the Lord willing — it may or may not take me so long as that to write what I wish; for, though I know whereof the seas I fain would traverse, and have my course in a measure shaped, yet is an inkhorn a tittleish craft for one of my years to embark in; and I know not whether I can leave a straight wake in steering with a quill for the first time.

So am I like at times to turn deviously into little coves and shallows of memory, for the solace of a quiet hour there, and the comfort of soft breezes that I have felt be-

fore; and all the while you will be wishing me under way again in the blue water of my narrative, that I may get to my voyage's end. But you must be patient to hear of some things whereof I have told you before, and let me speak of some events with which you are familiar; for if God so wills that you, too, shall have a son, this journal is to be handed down to him.

And first do I give fair warning to any of my race that may perchance not feel the red blood tingling warm in their bodies, and may shrink from the story of the doings of pirate men, and of the harsh perversities of the sea, that they may as well rid themselves of this tale at once; for, though it doth have the light and sweetness of a woman's love to leaven it, yet, in the main, is it a story full of the wrath of God and man and of the angry ocean; with the hand of man often against his fellow, and the judgment of the heavens and the sea upon them both.

Now in the year in which I shall begin, which was 1704, in the first of the reign of the good Queen Anne, I was seven years old and full as any lad of boyish pranks and notions. And so, too, this fine city of Boston was then, in a way, in its childhood, and, likewise, with odd notions and manners — at least they seem so to you, and will seem stranger in the years to come. For I have seen the village grow as though the houses sent out roots under the soil and shoots of dwellings sprang up from them; and great wharves have put roofs above the clam beds; and tall ships dig with their anchor flukes where we were used to set our lobster-pots.

In those days I lived with a cousin, one Ephraim Coffin,

who was somewhat of a man in the town, though he was as proud of assuming to be a poor and plain man as others are of being rich; and, withal, he had a snug sum set out at investment, and owned two or three small stores; was a selectman, and passed most strictly on the eligibility of newcomers to citizenship in the town; and had not infrequently the parson to dinner, and good liquors to offer him.

My cousin was, moreover, a most pious and devout man, for ever ready to praise God and hate the Papists, but loving, as in duty bound, all other enemies, save and excepting Frenchmen, Indians, Quakers, pirates, witches, and poor debtors. He was strictly observant of the Lord's Day, and we were wont to begin our observance of, or preparation for, that on sunset of Saturday night, ceasing all labours then, save some care of the cattle that must be taken, and the setting of the milk in the pans. Then, of a Sunday, there were stiff clothes to be put on, and stiff faces to be worn in keeping, and stiff manners starched with grace, so stiffly that often they were not grown limp on Monday morning, but lasted piously well into the week, even to the day of special meeting on Thursday.

As for my cousin's wife, she was a tall and prim and rather spare woman, with such a zeal for devotion and the inculcation of the gospel into youthful minds that she was for ever pouring it into me, as though I were a churn standing ready, and gave me frequent shakings to set it working.

And I had forgotten to say that the reason for my being with these kin was, because I had neither father nor mother nor any one else in the world to care for me.

Nor have I remembrance of my father, beyond a kindly hand that stroked my hair, and a strong arm that lifted me as high as his head, and a voice that was never raised in anger. As for my mother, I have no memory of her face; nor heard I her voice beyond the time of my first year, when I had no thought of it — only that I must have turned to it and known it from others, after the mysterious way of infants.

There was little my father left for me, beyond a legacy of a few pounds, and a case of surgical instruments that I never used, save those I could divert to carpentry without my cousin's knowledge, and a small library of books. And, by these latter, he was a doctor who had a taste for reading; for he had, besides many books with queer pictures of skeletons and things I had no pleasure in looking at, a good Shakespeare, with plates of fiery men in armour, absorbing to gaze upon till one came of age to find the lines better than the pictures; a few Latin books, and some free translations of Virgil and of Horace; the writings of Cervantes, some sermons of Cotton Mather, who was our greatest preacher, the Bible, and the "Pilgrim's Progress," an edition of which had been but newly printed in our town.

I know little more of my dear father and mother to tell you, but that they came of good English family, and were shortly come over to the colonies, where my father was to practise medicine, when they both died, one not long following the other.

My cousin's home was a good, substantial house, of brick come in ballast from England, on a queer little street,

or lane, called Frog Lane, just off Newbury Street, and which led up into the Common. It was conveniently in the way of the pond along the street of that name near by, and to the fields and fish-ponds back to the westward; but was, I recall, of a most trying distance from the Old North Church, away over the other side of the town in Clarke's Square, where we went three times of a Sunday to hear Cotton Mather preach. And I remember of that, that my boots always hurt me, for I was barefoot the rest of the week, and my cousin Mercy would not let me take them off in meeting.

Here in Frog Lane my cousin Ephraim had, I say, a good house, two big barns, for cattle and hay and farming implements, and did some blacksmithing and carriage mending, besides his farming. And, a mile and a half out of the town, he had two other farms where he cut hay and grain for market.

Of the playmates I had at that time, there were two that were of account to be mentioned now, for the part they played then and have since played in the shaping of my fortunes. These were Elias Andrews, and Elbridge Carver. As for Elias, he was ten years old and bulky for his age, and had a clumsy strength, which was greater than mine — though, indeed, I think I admit of it now for the first time, since it be a sensitive point with striplings; and Elbridge was about my age, perhaps nearly a year older.

We had in those days two great afflictions to inspire us in our play: the one was Indian warfare, and the other piracy on the high seas. So that, on one day, the woods and fields back of my cousin's farm were alive with cruel

savages, armed with wooden tomahawks and bows and arrows and scalping-knives — yea, and scalps, of cow's hair and moss, hanging at their belts; and they yelling most hideously. And on another day, there were fine ships, of logs and planking, overtaken on the ponds by the buccaneers, and their crews made to walk the plank; those that could swim being put overboard in the middle, and the smaller lads poled in nearer shore and tumbled off into the mud.

And, indeed, it often happened that some of us luckless ones, smaller than the older fellows, were not only scalped and burned at the stake, but, on the same day, were made to walk the plank into the pond and robbed of our gold and treasure.

Now Elias Andrews, being, as I say, of a larger build than most of us, and his father a member of the Governor's Council, and Elias having much pocket-money, and proud of it all, he was much loth to submit to the humiliation of being scalped, even though it be his turn, and though he had more than his share of gory trophies dangling at his belt. So that, whenever we played the bloody massacre of Casco, Elias must ever be the Indian chief; and, when we played the fight of Sandy Stream, where the Massachusetts men had ambushed and defeated a bigger band of savages than they numbered, why there was Elias changing his painted skin to white, and putting on his fringed buckskin leggings, and playing Captain Anderson.

Moreover, he being then, as always—and I say it now in calmer judgment than I could have done some years back — of a disposition not adaptable to playing the one

that yields gracefully, it were always a matter of doubt whether it were pleasanter to scalp Elias, against his inclination, than to be scalped by him; for he had a way, by reason of bull strength, of parting with his scalp most vigorously, protesting with elbows and knees; and, in dying, of leaving a mark or two on his enemy, not to be too greatly humiliated.

Another sort was Elbridge Carver, for, if he had been endowed with two scalps, you might have had them both twice over, in the same afternoon, he was that generous; and, too, he did refute what many people say, that fat persons be the better natured; for, certain, Elbridge was as lean as a pickerel in the spring; yet was he ever smiling and ready to offer a hand at chores. He lived down in the vicinity of some queer little lanes — I forget whether it was Cow Lane or Flownder Lane, but it was close by a ropewalk, and his father was employed there.

Elias lived in a fine house in Marlborough Street, and his father was a merchant with several vessels trading out to Jamaica and Cuba. He was, I think, a kind and good man — though he spoiled Elias — and he gave me a shilling one Christmas for pulling Elias out of the ice; so that I was never wanting money after that, and had the constant proof of his generosity ever by me; for Cousin Mercy would not have me spend so much money, but put it into a tea-caddy in the china closet for me to look at.

Now I have been trying, all this time, to get down to a certain day in June — the 13th, to be exact; and I have it in black and white from the records of my very distant kinsman, one John Campbell, who was a newspaper

publisher and made an account of all such happenings. And I see the only way is, to set down the date abruptly and start fair from that, and not try to beat up to it gracefully; for I keep making leeway, not having the keel of experience to hold up into the wind with.

On this 13th of June, then, although it was a Tuesday, and one might have expected to lie in a calm streak of spiritual contentment between Sunday and Thursday, yet was my cousin Mercy seized of a great zeal for the minister to come and exhort and catechize, and to taste of her mince pie, and drink, after tea, of Cousin Ephraim's best wine. So was I put into my boots early of the afternoon, and had my scalp brushed mercilessly — Cousin Mercy was fiercer than the Indians — and a jacket on that made me feel as though it was Sunday, along with the prodding of Cousin Mercy as to my catechism.

But it seems I had a sudden wilting under this unexpected blaze of grace, and was seized with a terrible sickness, which I did try to describe vaguely as something between toothache and a pain in the belly, locating it now higher and now lower according to the changing expression on my cousin Mercy's face; and when she seemed to show a deeper concern for, and more consideration of, a species of neuralgic toothache, she having had something of the same sort not long since, there was no longer doubt left in my mind that that was the matter.

So I was suffered to lie down, too ill to undress, on the bed in the little room at the end of the long back hallway, and slumber, uncatechized and unmolested. But the room was hot and stuffy, and the flies were buzzing on the

window-panes; and it was clear to me, the fresh, outdoor air were better for my suffering. So I went outside and laid me down on the grass-plot; and Cousin Mercy found me groaning there, for she had heard my footsteps and come quickly to see why I stirred.

But she went back soon, and I made another stage in my progress as far as the edge of the orchard, where I rested against a tree and sucked a piece of rock candy for my toothache, and to prevent any recurrence of the pain below. Then I wandered, restless with suffering, out of the line of vision from the front parlor, whence the tones of Parson Mather came resonantly, and sat by the edge of the tiny brook that came down from a spring in the meadow. There I lay for awhile, till the spirit moved me to walk on again.

This time I got as far as the cow-barn, and, having that between me and the seat of catechism, I removed my boots and took to my heels. So great was my distress, I went on a mile to see if I could outrun it — and did so.

When I had come to the pond — which was the great Bay of Honduras, and horribly beset by wicked rovers — there was a fine ship in the offing, flying the flag of Spain; and she had a treasure of gold-dust and doubloons and other precious stuff aboard; and Elbridge Carver was captain of her, and he had a crew of smaller lads, and they were all mortally in fear of pirates, but ready to die fighting if boarded. They were poling across the fearful sea, and their clothes were all piled in a heap on shore beneath some alders.

Now in the bushes, up along the coast of the bay, was Captain Kidd in hiding, on a great brig that flew a red flannel flag with a skull and bones done in white paint on it; and this Kidd was a desperate fellow, with his clothes on, and a blood-red sash over his shoulder, and a real pistol dangling from it, and a black hat, with a red feather in it by way of dreadful adornment, slouching over his eyes. And he was ready to crowd on sail and pursue this Spanish treasure-ship, and slaughter all on board with a huge wooden cutlass that lay at his feet on the quarter-deck.

Moreover, was Kidd willing and eager to venture it all single-handed, against odds, for the greater glory to be won, and that he might wear the fine trappings of piracy and not have to swim at the finish.

So that, when I came suddenly upon the pirate retreat, and said: "Hold on, Elias, I'll come aboard and help you," then he was fain ready to parley with me, as they say, being taken aback and not wholly pleased with the idea of sharing the venture. However, we came at length to an agreement, by which I should strip off my clothing and ship under Kidd as William Moore; and Kidd would murder me, after we had taken the ship, as the real Kidd did his gunner, and throw me overboard; only Elias would not be hanged for this, as Kidd was — which seemed to me hardly fair, especially as the hanging could be at the water's edge and need not hurt his clothes.

Now when the Spanish treasure-ship was sighted off our larboard bow, we cracked on sail; that is, I did the poling, most vigorously, while Elias, brandishing his

cutlass, gave orders, and out we shot from our hiding and made chase. It was an awful moment; and when we had come alongside, and Captain Kidd had fired his pistol (purloined for the purpose from the family gun-room) and I had stood by with grapping-irons and made fast to our prize, I felt my pulses throbbing hard, and the thrill of victory tingling through me.

Then it was a fine sight to see Kidd demand the Spaniard's treasure, and order the stuff brought aboard; which was done, the gold and jewels clinking (with a tinny sound), in four canvas sacks. But the climax was most awe-inspiring and gruesome; for the unpacified Kidd would spare not a man of the whole ship's crew — they being all swimmers — and, one by one, they must walk solemnly off into the sea; nor jump nor dive, but drop off abruptly, as though there were no pleasure in it, but a horrible thing to do.

Then it was all to be done over again, and yet again, with variations as to cargo and the tonnage and nationality and rig of the ships engaged; but it was ever Elias who was Kidd, and the knowledge casting a depression upon me that I was to be a foully murdered man, when it pleased Elias, and he to cheat the gallows and revel unpunished in his wickedness. So it came about that the gunner was, in a measure, false to Kidd, and employed the fast fleeting moments of his existence in rank collusion and conspiracy with the captain of our prize.

But it fell out not all according to their plot — which was but for flight together, leaving Kidd in solitary glory in mid-ocean upon his brig — but worse; and it happened

that on the next capture of Captain Elbridge's vessel, when Kidd and I had grappled and boarded her, there was a gory battle; and, in the midst of it, overboard went Kidd, himself, into the sea, sousing his brave dress and accoutrements, and maddened as any red buccaneer that ever lashed himself into a fury.

Up came Captain Kidd to the surface, black with rage, and yearning then and there to murder William Moore and away swam the Spanish captain and William Moore, and took to the woods, carrying their clothes, lest they become in truth Kidd's loot, to be thrown into the pond, or worse, carried back to town. Nor did this outraged and betrayed buccaneer deign to pursue us rogues, but strode away for home, hot with wrath. Then, at length, did Elbridge Carver and I return from our harbouring place and sweep the seas together, an irresistible pair of freebooters, exulting in our vanquishment of Kidd and at my escape from murder at his hands.

Now time passes swiftly by, when decks are swimming with red blood and men fall dying on them, and great ships are scuttled, with all on board. And so I heeded not that the sun was dropping down in the west, and fought on and drowned and died a hundred deaths and came to life again whooping for more of it; till, all at once, Elbridge gave a yell of dismay that had no ring of counterfeit in it, and pointed in ashore from the Spanish galleon whereon we stood.

There, on the bank, in the shadow of a clump of bushes, and even then stooping to cut a thick alder stick, was my cousin, Ephraim Coffin, full of the stimulus of righteous

exhortation, and burning, like an angel of wrath, to avenge the affront and the deceit practised by me against religion.

Now I wished I had been murdered by Captain Kidd a dozen times, and had it over with, rather than fall in this measure a victim to his vengeance — for Elias had, indeed, set my cousin upon us. But there was no hanging back when Cousin Ephraim spoke, and I parted sadly with Elbridge, who swam ashore to the other side of the pond; and I poled my raft slowly in to land.

“ And so this be your dodge, Master Philip, to forsake the way of godliness, and refuse to profit by the great outpouring of grace that has been ours to-day,” said my cousin, grimly, as I neared him. He spoke the words heavily and thickly, as a man who does not wish to make an exhibition of his anger, but yet is full of it; and I knew he was longing to get his hands on me.

“ Come ashore quick, now,” continued Cousin Ephraim. “ Here be a sure cure for an ache in other parts of the body than the head, I’m thinking;” and he raised the stick ominously.

I sat on the edge of the raft, just out of reach, wishing to argue for a moment, but with not an idea in my head to offer for an excuse.

“ I be feeling badly yet, Ephraim,” I murmured — and I could think of nothing else to say by way of beginning.

“ Ye’ll be feelin’ worse a minute hence,” said Cousin Ephraim; “ a deal worse, and ye can reckon on’t.” And he added, “ But what possessed ye, Philip, to run and leave us this way, and the great Cotton Mather ready

to hear the catechism and pray that ye grow up to be a Christian man?"

"It was the devil, Ephraim," I cried, thankful for the inspiration, and relieved to transfer the blame, even thus vaguely.

"Aye, it was the devil, Philip," responded Ephraim, smiling through his set teeth; "and I'll cast him out er yer for a little time, even though it be but a few moments, and he come back, raging."

Now I saw it was all up with me, and the sooner over the better; and I slumped off the raft, and Cousin Ephraim had me by an arm, and I winced though he had not struck me a blow.

Then he gripped me till my arm ached, and he raised the alder stick and let it swing; and I felt as though a hundred hornets had got me on the leg. But Cousin Ephraim suddenly stopped and looked about him, and I heard a voice cry:

"The pirates! The pirates! They've got the pirates, Quelch's men, Captain Coffin, and they be bringing them up into the town."

It was a man whose farm adjoined Cousin Ephraim's on the outskirts of Boston; and he ran past us now, crying out thus that the pirates had been captured. And at this, Cousin Ephraim loosed his grip of me and exclaimed in astonishment:

"Aha! They've got Quelch's men, have they? The bloody pirates!" And he seemed to forget me for a moment, and started to hurry away. Then he turned back again — but his pirate was gone. Seizing my

clothes and tucking them under one arm, I ran as though the Evil One, just evicted by Cousin Ephraim, were indeed again seeking shelter and pursuing me. Nor did I pause to dress till half a mile lay between me and Cousin Ephraim.

CHAPTER II

THE PIRATE'S RHYME

If you would know what the capture of these pirate men meant to our citizens of Boston, then you must go back for a moment to the sensational seizing and trial of Captain William Kidd, which was still a recent event in the minds of our townspeople, and see what suspicion some of our richest business men, but, more especially, those of New York, were under; and how this capture was a timely opportunity for our community to clear its skirts of complicity with piratical ventures.

For it had become a scandal throughout England that our coast, that is, all New England and to the south of us, and even as far as the Spanish Islands, was a refuge and a breeding-place for buccaneers.

Aye, and worse than that; for, when this William Kidd was put upon his trial, there were ugly rumours spread that there were solemn, church-going merchants in New York, and some said in Boston, too, that had shared with the pirate his plunder and were all ready to fit him out again when he was seized.

Indeed, this Kidd had the audacity, on and before his trial, to cause the inference to be drawn from his words that the king, himself, who had given him a commission to prey on pirates, and had ten shares in the venture, was

not wholly displeased at Kidd's mistakes in thinking merchantmen might be pirates or Frenchmen.

However this might be — and I think there was never any proof that the king was cognizant of the game — there was great scandal about it; and the Earl of Bello-mont, who was governor of New York and Massachusetts, was most anxious to get himself exonerated in the matter, because he had found out that his predecessor in office, Governor Fletcher, had been disgracefully mixed up with pirates; and he had even recommended that Fletcher be sent to England and tried for piracy; though this was never done.

Now when Kidd was captured there was no law in our colonies for the punishment of piracy with death; and so Kidd was sent to England and tried and put upon the gallows there. And, thereupon, in that same year in which he was taken, 1699, there was made a parliamentary enactment applicable to all the colonies of Great Britain, providing for the hanging of pirates wherever seized and convicted, without transportation to England.

Still, it seemed, the business did not fade, but flourished; and there were laces and fine cloths and rare metal-work put upon the counters in New York and Boston town, that our good townspeople bought and asked, banteringly, what time of night they had been rowed ashore. And in all of which smoke there was some fire.

Now when Governor Joseph Dudley took his oath, in 1702, he had vowed his colony should be no nest for rogues to sequester in. And in this month of June, 1704, he had given orders for the capture of Captain John Quelch, who

had been pirating in the brigantine *Charles*, and was seeking a refuge in our vicinage.

So had our town been mightily astir for days, we being acquainted of the fact that Quelch's men lay hidden, some near Salem, and others at Cape Ann, out Gloucester way. And it seems Major Stephen Sewall, a plucky man, and a band of some three-score volunteers had gone about the business in earnest, and had rounded up Quelch and some four and twenty of his men in all, following some of them as far as the Isle of Shoals. And now, this Tuesday of fateful date, the 13th, back he had come to Boston with nine of the pirate crew; and the news had got a mile out of Boston already.

It seems the tidings had come in ahead, by way of a fast-sailing fisherman, and half the town was blocking the way when the men were landed at Clarke's wharf; and these pirates, at least, had come into an atmosphere charged with righteous indignation at their wickedness, for the time being; for, but two days before, our ministers from their pulpits had called forth a judgment on them and exhorted a great zealousness toward their seizure and punishment.

When I had fled into the town, I had no need to inquire whither the pirates were coming, for men and boys, and women, too, were on the way there, and the air was snapping with information. Major Sewall and a guard of some thirty men had landed the pirates, and were marching them up through the streets. They had come up by way of Fish and Ann Streets, and were turning into the square on the way to the prison when first I saw them.

Here were nine of the pirates, tramping along in the dust, with the chains upon them, and the shoutings of the mob in their ears, and they hot and worn looking, with the weariness of hiding and the menace of death all about them; and somehow it did not seem to me then that to be a pirate was, after all, the merriest life to choose; but perhaps it were better to be adopted by the Indians, and live in a wigwam by the cool streams, and hunt the red deer in the woods.

For it came sharp upon me, like a good lesson, Cousin Mercy would have said, now that I was fresh from making boyish sport of the thing, that the way of piracy led to the gallows. Nor would I ever again put boldly out from the Bay of Honduras, with Kidd or any other man, to prey on ships loaded deep, nor feel again the thrill of fierce exultation to lift the bags of rich treasure aboard.

Perhaps I even felt the guilt of piracy, too, upon my soul, having run away from exhortation to embark in it, and had a sort of fellow-feeling for rogues caught red-handed and about to suffer. Be that as it may, I know I was not of those that hooted and jeered, but that I felt sorry for the pirates, and gave them, silently, my sympathy and wished that they might not be hanged.

Here, too, was romance and inspiriting tradition dealt a deadening blow; for there was but one man among them that answered in the least to the pirates of the Spanish main, or to the rumours concerning Kidd, as I had heard them; and all the others might pass for ordinary Jacks, paid dogs' wages by the month to pull and haul on tarry rigging and take their turn at swabbing decks.

This man was not one with the others, neither by his build, nor dress, nor walk and carriage, nor by the look upon his face; for, whereas they were of medium build and thick-set, he was of a great stature, tall and very broad in the shoulders, and thin in the flanks, like a man of strength. He wore a coat and waistcoat of fine cloth, and they had a sort of richly worked embroidery on them, though not conspicuous; and there was an elegance to the shaping and set of them, like our governor's. The man walked along with his head erect, and his eyes snapped as he looked over the heads of the crowd; and I thought that of all these men I should fear him the most.

Now, just as he was marched past where I stood, pop-eyed, and singling him out from all the others, with boyish intuitiveness, it chanced that he turned and looked directly toward me, and our eyes met for an instant, as happens in a crowd. And I fancied his face softened ever so slightly — and I could not help it, but cried out:

“ Oh, sir! I hope they'll not hang you.”

His face blazed with anger and his hands clenched in their chains, and his lips parted to show his teeth set firm, with strong emotion; but it was not at me, but because the thought of ignominious death, that I had recalled to him suddenly, was maddening. Then a musketeer gave me a cuff over the head that sent me sprawling in the street, and the march went on; and when I at length got my breath to follow, there were a hundred men and women between me and the pirates. So I saw at a distance the prison gate open and swallow them.

Then I went home to Cousin Ephraim's, with my heart like lead, and a great lump in my throat that it hurt me to swallow; but Ephraim soon made me forget that, and when he had done with me I felt that I would gladly be a pirate, and be hanged for it, if I could but capture one ship, with Ephraim aboard, before I had to swing. As for Cousin Mercy, who sent me to bed supperless, with "The Wicked Man's Portion," by Increase Mather, to read by candle-light, while she sat by, sewing, it seemed to me it might be best to maroon her on a cannibal island; and I fell asleep reading the scheme into the sermon, and dreamed that she had the whole cannibal tribe and Ephraim, too, on a gibbet a hundred feet long, and was reading a chapter from the Bible to them before she hanged them all.

Now there was no winking nor delay over the proceedings, but on this very day his Excellency opened the High Court of Admiralty to arraign the men; and more than a score, including Captain Quelch himself, pleaded not guilty. And then, on the 19th, the great High Court did sit again and hear of the felonies and piracies and murders by this Quelch and his men.

It seemed by the evidence that they were all much in the same boat with Quelch, and parties to his many villainies, save one Peter, or John, Roach, who had but lately shipped with Quelch as mate. And some said his name was Peter, and some John; but he gave it to the Court as John — though those that captured him ashore on Cape Ann declared he had said it was Peter. However, it was shown by Quelch, himself, that the man had joined the brigand-

tine *Charles* at a port in Cuba and had committed piracy with the others.

Quelch, it seems, had grown suspicious, and perhaps afraid, of him, for he had borne himself more like one that was used to give commands than to receive them; and a pirate captain may be deposed, as Quelch well knew, if a better man be found.

As for the man, he carried himself like an English gentleman before the Court, and swore he knew not that he was shipping among pirates until he had gotten well to sea in the *Charles*; but there was evidence enough to make a black case against him — and there was a tiny skull and flag done in red ink upon his right shoulder — and he was sentenced to die, with twenty odd more, including Quelch. And this Peter, or John, Roach was the man to whom I had spoken on the march to the gaol.

Now, although there were five and twenty men clapped into prison for piracy, and nearly all of them sentenced to swing, it turned out that our governor had no intention of any such wholesale celebration of the new law, but would be content to show our respect for it by a more moderate example. So, of these men, all but seven now came, trembling, out of the black shadow of the death-tree, being saved by reprieve, or by *quasi*-bargain for turning Crown's evidence, and so on, by one reason and another.

I set down the names of these seven men, that I may make a complete record of it, it being an odd thing, and the first hanging of pirates, so I am told, in this town of Boston. There were: Captain John Quelch, John Lambert, John Miller, Erasmus Peterson, John Roach, Francis

King, and Christopher Scudamore. These men, being marked for death on the last day of this month of June, were set apart in the gaol and carefully guarded.

Now it came about, in the eleven days that intervened between the trials and the day of execution, I was mightily swollen in pride and greatly looked up to by the other lads, because of my cousin Mercy's brother, Caleb Spooner, being gaoler and letting me into the prison now and again to look at the pirates.

So that, when I had but emerged from the great oaken door, then I was at once surrounded by a score of comrades. It were a great strain upon me to tell these lads of all the wonderful things I had heard the pirate men say — especially as they spoke only now and then a word or two to one another, but sat for the most part silently, being bound in chains against their escape. And I was fain to draw largely on my own piratical experiences in the Bay of Honduras, to sustain the reputation I had suddenly acquired; so that when I told, at length, how Scudamore had harangued the others on how he had, with a crew of twenty rovers, taken and burned a big galley off Bermuda, and each had shared a great cargo of gold-dust, it were really Elbridge Carver and I that had done the desperate thing on one of the ponds on Cousin Ephraim's farm.

I had been four or five times into the gaol when I stood one morning before a little barred enclosure where, one by one, there were let in the seven condemned men to walk about a bit, free from part of their chains and to breathe the fresh air from the little barred window that opened off to the grass and trees. There, pacing slowly

to and fro, and so absorbed in his own thoughts that he did not notice me, was the great, tall man with the piercing black eyes, and the manner, still, of a captain that should soon order all hands from below.

It seemed to me a dreadful thing that this fine gentleman should be caged here like a beast, and I wondered that he could be so stern and unmoved, with the days of his life so shortly numbered; for I could not understand that one in such straits did not beg for life, and rave and cry and fall into a frenzy, and swear he would never go a-pirating again if let off — as I should have done. And I was sorry Caleb had let me in to look at him, and I felt a sinking in the pit of my stomach, and the tears were in my eyes; but I could not go away.

Presently the man turned and saw me, but deigned to notice me no more than if I had been a mouse, and went on pacing to and fro, talking softly to himself. But soon he came near to me again, and turned once more and looked me in the face. He seemed surprised to see me still there, for he stopped and scowled at me and —

“What the devil are you doing here, brat?” he exclaimed.

“Nothing,” I said.

He made a gesture of impatience and went on with his walking for a moment, but came again later and looked me over, curiously.

“All of a kind!” he exclaimed, talking not to me, but to express his thoughts aloud. “A breed of lean, psalm-singing, sanctimonious Puritans, tickling their hands with the gold and giving us an open roadway to bring it in; and

making a smug show of honesty when they've got it. Fool! Fool that I was, to knuckle to Quelch so long, and not take the ship where I wanted."

He went to striding back and forth again at a great rate, and would have thought no more of me had I not interrupted him.

"I'm sorry for you," I blurted out, as he strode past. "I wish they wouldn't hang you. I'll tell Caleb so."

"What's that?" he cried, fiercely. "Are you there yet, boy? Get out! Be gone! Will these dogs of Puritans not leave me in peace now, but they must let their pups in to worry me?"

At this — for he turned on me in a terrible manner — I dodged back and was scuttling off like a rabbit; but he roared out at me again and cried, "Come back here!" in a voice so stern that I ran back, frightened, though there were the bars between us.

"So you're sorry for me, eh, lad, are you?" he inquired, in a softer voice.

"Yes, I am, sir," said I.

"Do you know what they'll do to me, boy?" he continued; and his voice was harsh again.

"I — I — think so," I replied.

"They'll make a fine show of me for the rabble of Boston to look at!" he cried, sneeringly; and again seemed to say it not to me. "Aye, and they'll badger me with their parsons and their psalm-singing and their prayers a league long; and give me no peace to the end — the hypocrites! And pirate goods to be bought in the stores of Boston to-day!"

I knew not what to say to this — for it was beyond me — so I held my tongue.

“So you’re sorry for me, eh, lad?” he asked again, abruptly, but more gently and persuasively.

“I’m very sorry, sir,” I answered.

“Then you can do me a kindness,” he said. “Will you do it?” And he looked hard at me.

“I — I’ll try, sir,” said I, and was all of a tremble; for I had heard of men escaping prison through keys and weapons hidden in pies and cakes, and I feared I was about to be drawn to commit myself to awful felony.

“Then, lad, you may get me some tobacco,” said the pirate. I felt a great hand let go its clutch upon my heart.

“I’ll get it, sir, right away,” said I.

“That’s a good lad!” he exclaimed. “And you must smuggle it in to me, for these good, honest men will give us not a bit of it — and it be our last days — for Cotton Mather, they say, has said we must be purified and be purged of our defilement, that he may the better pray for us.”

This, I must say, put it in a sorry light for me; for Cotton Mather’s word was law, and I had slighted him not long since by running away from his exhorting. Still, I was bound by my word and I would not break it.

“I’ve no money to give you, lad,” added the man. “The Boston men have got it, and a bag of gold-dust, too, that’s mine. You’ll have to get the stuff yourself. And I think I’ll stand their preaching — and their hanging, too — the better, with a load of it between my jaws. Now go on, my good lad, and don’t be long.”

Away I scampered, troubled sore in my mind ; for how I was to get tobacco I knew not, since I dared not go to buy it, even if I could get my money from the teapot where Cousin Mercy had it banked.

Here was fate laying my course for me, however. For, as I came along the lane, there were the bells ringing for the noon hour. Cousin Ephraim had gone in from the carriage-shop to the kitchen, to wash up for dinner, and his leather apron, with a huge pocket in it, was hanging in the shop, on the wall by the forge.

Now I knew that Ephraim had ever the weed about him, and chewed before breakfast to get his appetite up, and between breakfast and dinner to stay himself, and after dinner to settle that meal, and before bedtime to make him contented to sleep. And in his apron pocket was, I knew, a great piece of tobacco ; for I had seen him start the day's work with it. So I slipped into the shop and took it, and thrust it into my trousers pocket — and felt that I was lost for ever, and that it was entered in the last account against me, along with yearnings toward piracy.

Not that I would steal, for pirate or any other man ; and I had vowed to put the price of it back in Cousin Ephraim's pocket, the first money I had of my own to keep. Yet, all through dinner, I could not look Cousin Ephraim in the face ; and Cousin Mercy wondered why I did not eat. Nor could I, for the food stuck hard in my throat, and it seemed as though it would not go down.

Then I got away before Ephraim had finished his after-dinner pipe, to be ready for chewing, and had not put on his apron and found that his tobacco was gone. Across cor-

ners, and with short cuts, I made hot speed for the prison, and came shortly within the shadow of it, my heart beating fast, and I scant of breath.

But, as I darted up to the door, a stern, solemn voice, clear-cut and commanding, halted me; and, looking up, there I saw, standing with one foot upon the threshold, the great Cotton Mather. Never shall I forget — and he be some thirty years dead now — that wonderful, calm, keen, intelligent, aye, noble face, as he gazed wonderingly down at me.

As I saw him then, so I see him now, with his huge wig, carefully curled, parted evenly on the top and coming down to his very shoulders; and I note the manner in which it set off his handsome, scholarly face. And if I did not mark in detail then — as I did often afterwards, when he stood up of a Sunday in the pulpit — his splendid, broad, full forehead, his prominent but finely shaped nose, his heavy eyebrows, his deeply indented chin, and firm mouth, with the upper lip elegantly curving upward at the edges, like an Indian's bow, — if, I say, I did not then define and analyze the strong features of the man, certain it is that the commanding effect of the whole stirred me to my very depths; and I had as lieve met at that moment an archangel with a flaming sword.

For this was the great Cotton Mather who ruled us as with a rod of iron, and whose voice was the voice of authority in all New England. He was, indeed, a man greater than any governor, by reason of his zeal and his wonderful mind and his indomitable will.

No boyhood, with its silly pranks, had this man experi-

enced; but a versifier in Latin he was at the age of twelve; steeped to the core of his brain in the mysteries and profundities of the Scriptures; a college graduate at the age of sixteen, and now, at the age of forty-two, the greatest man in the colonies.

Burning with zeal to his finger-tips was he, ever exhorting, preaching daily in the houses of his congregation, stopping men in the streets to argue of the Word with them, and gathering the children from their play to impress upon their minds the awfulness of the divine wrath and the penalties of sin. Withal, he was not free from a species of vanity, and the sound of his voice was not unpleasant to his ears.

Now he looked down upon me sternly and asked:

“Boy, why came you here to this abiding-place of sinful men?”

“To see the pirates, sir,” I answered, faintly; and I could barely find voice to speak.

“Ah!” said he. “And they have sinned most grievously in the sight of God and man and against His great commands; and grievously must they pay the wages that are those of sin. And so, if you do come to look upon them, not vulgarly and witlessly as a little fool, from a mere burning of curiosity, but as upon men that have come to the brink of the Pit, even as you may come, then shall it profit you and may save you from their evil ways.”

He paused for a moment, and stood with his face raised to the skies as though lost in meditation. Then of a sudden he darted a look at me, laid a hand upon my shoulder and said, sharply:

" And will you, child of sin, forsake the devil and all his works ? "

I gasped assent, with my guilt wrapping me about and stifling me, like a cloud of smoke.

" Will you forsake the vanities of the sinful world ? " he continued — and, without pausing for answer, he added, in a voice as one sounding alarm to men sweeping on to destruction :

" Do you wish to be besooted with the smoke of the Bottomless Pit ? "

" No ! No ! " I cried, and clutched, with reeking hand, the tobacco in my pocket that I had taken from Cousin Ephraim, and felt the griping agony of remorse and attrition rack me like an ague.

" Will you be lost in the fog of iniquity ? " continued Cotton Mather, warming to his exhortation as he proceeded.

" No ! no ! " I groaned ; but the fog was even then enwrapping me in fabric icy cold ; and through its blackness I seemed rushing forward, with the pirate leading me on, in the hideous shadow of the black flag.

" Then go — go — boy — look, if you will, upon these wicked men, and let their example be as a fearful warning to you in the days to come."

He turned and walked away, for he had just stepped from out the prison where he had laboured to convert these doomed men from their sin.

Now Caleb let me into the gaol and I got, by and by, to where the pirate who called himself John Roach sat chained, and passed him over Cousin Ephraim's tobacco ;

and when I told him what I had been through to get it he said I was a plucky lad; and he took a great bite of the stuff as though he were hungry. So I left him, staring stonily at his prison walls; for he had relapsed suddenly into moodiness and seemed to forget that I was there.

It was two days before I went again to the prison, and this time I took another junk of the tobacco, twisted into a great black rope; for I had given my confidence to Elbridge Carver, not being able to cage the secret within me so but that it would escape. He was a lad of resource, and was under no such watchfulness as I, and had no trouble in getting the tobacco for me; and I had promised to beg Caleb to let him into the gaol to reward him.

This time was the tall, swarthy pirate in two moods the same minute; for the confinement had grown more irksome, and the yearning for free life was strong upon him. So that he called me a brave lad for my present, and cursed me and all my breed in the next breath for his troubles.

But all at once he beckoned me near and said, softly: "Have ye a stub of lead, boy, and a scrap of something to make my mark on?"

Of course he knew I had not, but it was his way of asking me to get them. So I went and begged the loan of an ink-horn and a quill and bit of paper from Caleb, who was a good-natured man, not having the same brand of disposition as Cousin Mercy. The pirate took them as handily as he could, for the irons about his wrists, and sat down to them in silence.

When he had done writing — and it was no small labour for him to work, hampered as he was — he rolled the

paper up, got a bit of string from me, tied the paper up securely and tossed it out.

“Take it home, and let them that be good at riddles puzzle over it,” he said, as though he thought I could not read, being so young; but I could read right well, having been started at it at five years, partly by Cousin Mercy, but more by my own inclination.

“ ’Tis a bit of doggerel that the mate hitched together, to keep the bearings in mind, boy,” he said, “and it be no verse of mine; for, by the Lord! Jack Brandt could do a better bit of rhyming than that, an he set his hand to it.”

Now what the pirate meant by all this I had not the least idea in the world; but he had said that Jack Brandt could have done the verse better, and I wondered if he might not mean himself; and so I asked him who Jack Brandt was.

“Jack Brandt!” he exclaimed, sharply. “Who said anything about Jack Brandt? ‘Jack Roach,’ I said, my name being Jack, or John, as they will. As for the paper, lad, show it to them at home; and if they would know more, let them come and ask me.”

“More of what?” I asked, being muddled in my head at his strange talk and his ill-tempered denial of his own speech.

“Stupid!” he snapped, impatiently. “ ’Tis a passport to more yellow money than you’ll ever see again piled in one heap if you live a hundred years. Tell them so at home. Let them take it or leave it to rot. Let them get it from that, if they can. It’s all there in black and white—though ’twould puzzle any man, and like enough, Black

Dan Baldrick, to figure it. An he had but the lay of it, he'd buy your governor out, twice over — and he's sold his soul to the Evil One forty times over for half it."

Here was more mystery to me, and a hint of money that made my head swim more and more, and the sound of still a new name.

"And who is Black Dan Baldrick?" I asked, wondering if he, too, would disappear and become somebody else at the repetition of his name.

"Dan-o'-the-Ship? Who is he!" screamed the pirate, rising in his chains of a sudden and bursting into a white heat of fury. "I wish I had him by the throat! I wish I had him here in this cell, begging me for his life! I wish he were lying there in that corner now, asking me for mercy! Who tricked me out of my ship? Who sent me here to hang, for the birds to feed on? Who sold his own brother for a month's pay and shore leave to drink it in?"

He grew quickly so hoarse with passion that the words seemed to choke him; and he ground his teeth together and shook his manacled fists, while the great drops of sweat fell from his forehead to the stone floor. I had never seen nor dreamed of such a picture of rage and fierce hatred; and the yearning for murder, thrown upon his face, as on a white screen, from the shadow of his heart, appalled me.

"Curse him!" he cried, hoarsely. "I curse him now and for ever, and the minute before I swing I'll put a curse on him then; and 'twill be as near a dead man's curse as I can swear it — and what's next to a dead man's curse is sure a dying man's — and that for Black Dan, and

may he die begging for his life like the coward that he is."

Then I stayed no more, for I was all of a tremble, and the man's voice sounded in my ears like a shriek from the pit that Cotton Mather had warned me of; and I ran, terrified, from the gaol, nor went there again to see the men that were to die.

CHAPTER III

DEATH OF QUELCH'S MEN

WHEN I had come to the supper-table that night Cousin Mercy demanded to know where I had been all the afternoon, and leaving chores neglected, and I said I had been to the prison.

“Then shame on you!” she cried, “for spending time in such a wicked place; and don’t go there again.”

But when I told her that the great Cotton Mather had met me on the door-step, once before, and had approved of my going, if I did but go in the proper spirit, she said it was well, and were my face and hands clean when I had met the preacher?

It was, indeed, a wicked thing, she said, to go and stare at bloody pirates with no intent to profit by their example, but for mere sinful curiosity; but, soon, she asked me what they looked like, and what they did, and what they talked of. And I should have liked to tell her of Scudamore’s great sea-fight, as I had told it to the boys, for she was keen to know about them, but I dared not.

So I thought me of the paper the pirate had given to me, and fetched it out of my pocket. There was the rhyme, lettered not badly, with something more scrawled below,

a tiny skull and bones in the right-hand upper corner, and a finish put to it all with the crude drawing of an anchor at the bottom, in lieu of signature. And I read it thus, over Cousin Ephraim's shoulder, when he had taken the paper:

“ When the skeleton's bones are bare,
When his ribs let in the air,
Sight across from skull to toe —
Weigh the anchor, now, yeave-ho ! ”

“ Rubbish and tomfoolery ! ” cried my cousin Ephraim, when he had gotten thus far. “ What silly doggerel be this ? ”

“ Read the rest of it,” said Cousin Mercy, who, I think, had the more insight to it.

“ They're sailing directions of some sort,” said Cousin Ephraim, reading :

“ ‘ South and west from the Fool's Cap to the Rock of the Four Seals ; thence south by east, past the Blind Sisters ; thence southeast — south — southwest — to the Inlet. Lay the north cape close aboard ; cross to south cape to clear middle ground ; west by edge of middle ground, leaving breakers starboard ; north between middle ground and shoal ; to island below river ; lie in north shore bight ; bar at low water.’ ”

“ Well,” said Ephraim, “ and what be it all about, and how did you come by it ? ”

“ ‘Tis treasure, of course,” exclaimed Cousin Mercy, smartly, “ and this be the key to it.”

“ Treasure it may be,” replied Cousin Ephraim, “ and treasure it is like to stay for all that's written here.”

"But he said it was all there, Ephraim," I cried.

"Who did?" demanded my cousin, impatiently.

"Let Philip tell it," said Cousin Mercy. And I gave them an account of how I had come by the paper, save the small matter of the tobacco.

"Zounds!" cried my cousin, when I had finished. "There's something in this, sure — and 'yellow money' did he say, 'piled high?'"

"That he did, Cousin Ephraim," I answered, "and enough to buy out our governor twice over."

"He meant gold," said Cousin Ephraim, "but how to come by it is another business — and the man's as good as dead — and how will he give up his secret but for his life?"

"We must see Squire Andrews," said Cousin Mercy.

"Well, say nothing of it to any one, then," said Ephraim, "for if aught can be done it needs must be done most quietly."

Now it surprised me not a little to see Cousins Ephraim and Mercy so eager of a sudden for the pirate gold, when it had in all likelihood the taint of bloodshed about it; but, for the matter of that, so has the subject of money and of the making of fortunes and the changing attitude of men toward it, when they have it not and after they have gotten it, been a puzzle and a confusion to me all my life.

Often since, in the days gone by, have I wondered what may have been the pirate's motive in giving me the paper. Sometimes I have thought that, because of a sort of liking, or fancy, that he had taken toward me, he had set about giving up the secret of buried treasure to me, and had

changed his mind in the doing of it, and had only done enough to tantalize us all; and then, again, have I thought it was in the nature of a trap he was setting for us; for it were twenty chances to one, had we gone about the seeking of it then, and with accurate directions to take us to the spot, we had fallen into a nest of pirates and never come back again to tell of it.

But mostly do I lean upon the notion that the man had some hope, even then, of getting clear by it, with the other half of the secret in his brain to illumine that which he had written on the paper, having a conviction that money would buy even our governor — which was not true.

At any rate, Cousin Ephraim saw no harm in trying to save a fellow man from the gallows. So he went and saw Elias Andrews's father, who was a lawyer-merchant, and one Samuel Treat, who had the ear of the governor's secretary. Then Cousin Ephraim went to the prison, and, later, Treat saw the governor's secretary. But the upshot was, they got a severe snubbing; and Ephraim and Mercy were so sour about it I dared not ask Ephraim what the pirate had said to him.

Still, Ephraim did not give over the matter wholly, but spent a deal of time in trying to find out if there were a jut of land anywhere in the colonies that was called the "Fool's Cap." There was not a sailor nor captain in all the port but whom he inquired of also concerning the Blind Sisters and the Four Seals. Yet could he get no satisfaction from it, and bit his nails with vexation and did not sleep well.

Then he threw down the paper in a fit of peevishness,

one day, and stamped his heel on it, and left it lying there; and I picked it up and folded it carefully and, later, sewed it within a scrap of sheepskin and hung it about my neck by a cord; but made, laboriously, a lettered copy of it, lest Cousin Ephraim might want it again.

In the meantime it came around to Sunday once more, a Sunday long to be remembered — and never have I seen its like again. For here were seven men that had sailed the wild seas for many a year, and never heard the Word, nor the name of God, but in blasphemy; and their hearts hardened to all sweet influences. And now they were to be brought into church and listen to the sounds of praise to His great name; to hear how He swept the wide stretches of the ocean with all-seeing eye; and how nothing they had ever done, yea, all their wickedness under the sun and stars, but had been seen by Him. And yet to learn how He would be merciful to them, after we had hanged them.

I remember, though I was but seven, as if it were yesterday, how Cousin Mercy had me up at half-past four in the morning, and that I was scrubbed and starched and jacketed and booted by daylight, and set down with a sermon of Cotton Mather's to read — Cousin Mercy had one ever at hand for me. We were all to go to the service, though it was to be at the church in Brattle Street, and not our Old North Church, for Cotton Mather was to assist the minister there in a special service, and Cousin Mercy said she would go to hear Cotton Mather, but she cared nothing about seeing the pirates.

Then, by nine, the bells were tolling, and we were well on our way to the church, with many neighbours, also, on

the way. We had set out early, so that Cousin Mercy could find a good seat from which to see the preacher near at hand; but, already, when we were at the door, was the church nearly filled, which caused Cousin Mercy to scold Ephraim. But a seat was found for us, not too far back, and soon after that there was no sitting left for anybody; and the streets and entire square in front of the church, and away down to the town dock bridge and up as far as Treamount Street were jammed with people.

Quickly now there arose, from all around, a loud murmur, like a rising wind, and the hum and sibilation of many voices; for the prison door was thrown open and a strange group was marching down Brattle Street to the church. On it came, and the tumult grew; and soon a great uproar broke, like a wave, against the church door. Then arose in the pulpit the great Cotton Mather on one side, and the pastor, Benjamin Colman, on the other, and they stretched out their hands and the church became silent.

At this there fell upon our ears the menacing, the dreadful sound of the clanking of chains; and down the aisle were marched seven men, loaded heavily with irons, the head constable and Caleb and a body of musketeers attending them. Down they marched, under the very shadow of the pulpit, and sat in the front seat, where the ministers could look close into their faces, and the eyes of all the congregation upon them.

How strange, how terrible, it all seemed to me, I can find no words to express; but it was like unto a fearful dream, and I wondered if the Lord might not perform a

miracle and break the chains from these men and declare in a loud voice that they should live, and not be hanged. I think I had some hopes of it, and whispered to Cousin Mercy to know if it could happen; but she pinched me and bade me keep quiet.

First, the pastor of the church stood up and prayed; and his prayer was long and of great earnestness and full of the fear of the terrible God, slow to anger but consuming in His wrath; yet forgiving and merciful to those that repented. And it seemed, several of the men were much moved by the prayer and cried aloud for forgiveness.

When he had finished his prayer, the pastor read a chapter from the Bible; and of this I remember nothing except there was something in it about the wicked being scourged as with a rod of iron; and I hoped they might not come into use and that Cousin Mercy would not get one, for she did very well with one of alder.

The singing of the psalm came next, and we all stood up to take part, the pirates rising, too, in their chains, like an awful example set before us of the wrath of the Lord, of which we sang. The psalm was not all unfamiliar to me, for I had heard Cousin Mercy sing it, and the opening lines of one verse went like this :

“ The wicked shall His triumph see,
And gnash their teeth in agony.”

It ended with the doom of everlasting night upon the sinful, their names lost in darkness for ever.

I know not with what strength these lugubrious waves of song beat in upon and broke against the hearts of men

doomed to die come five days more; but for me, flitting in uneasy spirit from the Bay of Honduras to the prison, and back and forth thus, they rolled in upon me in a cold, gray flood, beneath which my very soul lay as though lost beyond the doomsday; and cast me into a gloom that even the singing of Cousin Mercy, shrilly and through her nose, could not enliven, as it was wont to do.

Now Cotton Mather stood up, and said not a word for a full minute, but gazed fixedly at the seven sinful ones in their chains and their shame. It seemed to me that I should as lieves be dead as transfixed with that look, had I been one of them; for his was a face of vast and varied and comprehensive expression, so that these men looking into his eyes could read as in a book the story of their evil doing, the horror of the righteous, the wrath of God, the present humiliation that was upon them, and the punishment that lay even beyond the grave.

Not that, as a lad of foolish years, I analyzed and perceived it all thus, but the picture was burned upon my brain, and I have seen it often again and thought me much upon the significance of it. And, indeed, in the telling of it all now, and, also, of the execution of the men and the words spoken to and by the pirates, I do draw not wholly upon my boyish memory of it, but on the memory of others, who saw it with me, and who wrote down many things that I remembered on hearing again, but should have forgotten otherwise.

When Cotton Mather had stood for the minute, piercing the pirates with his glance, he opened his lips and said solemnly, and with sorrow in his voice:

"Lord, I am vile, conceived in sin."

Then upon a plane, even, with these men did Cotton Mather put himself and the whole congregation, as he spoke of the corruption and the taint that was upon each and every soul born into the inheritance of the sin of Adam. He pictured this original sin springing up from the seeds of this corruption, and the plants thereof flourishing or blighting within us by reason of the lives we led. Then he told of these men; how their souls had been enwrapped by this growth as though by poisonous vines, and that these must be cut ruthlessly away before the sunlight of salvation could enter their hearts.

What a weight of depression fell from me, like a garment cast off, when the great Cotton Mather sat down and I heard sexton Goodrich lifting the bolts of the doors to let us out! Then we sat in our seats while up the aisle the seven were marched, the chains upon them jingling as before.

Well do I remember how I cowered in my seat, a guilty wretch, as my tall, black pirate strode by, watching him out of the corners of my eyes to see how he looked after the sermon. Moreover, I had some boyish fear that he might espy me and say something about the tobacco, or, at least, my kindness to him, which would betray me; and I wondered, too, if he had the tobacco with him and found a secret solace in it.

But he strode along, with face of flint, though clouded with anger; and it seemed to me that Cotton Mather's sermon had only stirred him to a fury, though he scorned to have his emotion seen of the men he hated and despised.

The days went swiftly by, and I had no stomach to play at pirating more, though Elias had made it up with me, and was hot for playing the capture of the pirates; and I might be Captain Quelch, did I choose, and have Elbridge and Sammy Holmes and a dozen other lads for my crew, and Elias would play Major Sewall and capture us all. Yet, though I would not enter the prison again, from the horror of the thing, neither could I keep wholly away from it; and I spent hours walking about in that vicinity, gazing over at its sinister walls, with the spirits of all the pirates that were ever confined there, from Kidd and Bradish to Quelch and his crew, possessing and haunting me.

So, too, was the whole town in a state of uneasiness and restlessness over the dread thing that was now imminent; and there was nothing else talked of anywhere between the Charles River and Windmill Point and from the North Battery to the fortifications to the southward. So, there was fallen even a sort of lull over business and pleasures, from the Sunday up to Friday; for it was that day, ever fraught with evil portent for sailors, that was appointed for the execution.

At length the day came. Cousin Ephraim did no work that forenoon, I recall, but sat idly about in his shop, with neighbours dropping in all the time, to talk about the execution and ask Ephraim if he were going.

Cousin Mercy was for having me stay at home at first; and, indeed, I shook at the prospect of the sight, and could not decide that I wished to go until Mercy said I should not, and then I begged hard for Ephraim to take

me. Cousin Mercy shifted at length and thought it would cure me of playing at piracy, to see to what end it would bring me — and she knew I would tell her more about it than Ephraim, who was a monosyllabic man, except in the trading of horses.

It was about two o'clock, after we had had our dinner, that Ephraim and I set out from home to walk to the prison. When we had turned from Frog Lane into Newbury Street there were scores of men and women on the way already. We could see them coming in across the fields in all directions, and the roads were dusty with the wheels of farm wagons. Now and again, as we walked on, the prison bell and the bells of the Brattle Street and Old North Churches rang out with doleful clangour.

Soon we heard the tidings that the death-warrant had been read, that prayers had been said at the gaol, and the order of march formed. And so, as there were some thousand people betwixt us and the prison, we cut down through the lower part of the town and waited in Ann Street for the procession to come up to us.

There we heard, in a little while, the heavy thudding of the drums and the fierce screeching of the fifes, above the roar and shoutings that filled the streets. First there came in sight the two drummers that beat out, in unison, a slow, reverberating tap, warning the crowd clear of the procession. With them was a corps of four fifers.

Then there followed the great body of musketeers, forty of them, and the provost marshal and his officers and the constables. Behind them, and just in front of the seven

pirates, there walked an officer, or deputy, of the great High Court of Admiralty. He bore a large oar, sticking straight up in the air, like the sweep of a yawl, only it was silvered all over with a sort of silver paint, and was the insignia of the Admiralty Court which had jurisdiction of this thing. It was Ebenezer Smiley who bore this oar, and he seemed mighty proud of it and tramped along with his nose in the air; and I wondered if he had forgotten that he used to hold horses, and whisk the flies away from them with a horse-tail switch while Ephraim shod them.

Captain Quelch was the first pirate in line, and Christopher Scudamore next, and then the man who called himself John Roach; and the others, I do not remember their order. By the side of Captain Quelch, speaking a word of prayer now and again to him and to the others, walked Cotton Mather, in a flowing gown of black, and bare-headed, save for his big wig. Dressed all alike for the ordeal were the seven men, each in jacket and trousers of a blue cloth, and hats of a white stuff bound with black ribbons that depended in flying ends. The arms of each man were pinioned behind his back and there were chains upon the wrists.

Past us the procession moved along, down Ann Street into Fish Street, through Moon Street into Clarke's Square, and halted briefly before the Old North Church, where Cotton Mather delivered prayer. Then down they moved to the water-front and out on to Captain Scarlett's wharf, a crowd of men, women, and children at their heels, and the women and children screaming for sheer excitement.

Then Cousin Ephraim and I and a neighbour, Judson Snow, hurried on to a shipyard above the North Battery, where Ephraim had engaged for the day a small skiff in which to follow the boats to the gallows. We rowed out a piece and waited on our oars, Cousin Ephraim and neighbour Snow having each a pair, and saw the party embark and the procession continue by water.

There was much the same order as before, the drummers and fifers going on ahead in boats, and the musketeers in boats encircling the long-boat that bore the pirates, to prevent other craft crowding. In the bow of the long-boat sat Ebenezer, holding the silver oar, and in the stern, facing the pirates, sat Cotton Mather. In this boat were no oarsmen, but it was towed by another boat, with a line out from the bow.

To the north and west, following the curve of the shore, past the shipyards, the fleet of rowboats slowly moved in the direction of the Charlestown ferry; till, all of a sudden, at a bend of the shore, not a quarter of a mile away, there showed, ugly and hateful, a few feet out from the land, the outlines of the gallows. And with this, the whole strange setting of the death scene was spread before our eyes.

At a point near the Charlestown ferry, and about midway between Hanson's Point and the warehouse of Mr. Broughton, was the gallows set up, with the waters of the harbour flowing all about it, according to the wording of the law for the hanging of pirates: "Upon the sea, or within the ebbing and flowing thereof." This gibbet was a huge and awful thing, of heavy timbers, for seven men

were to die on it; and it loomed up for men to see a mile away.

Up on Broughton's Hill, overlooking the harbour, was a great black cloud of men and women and boys, to the number of several thousand; and all the wharves and shipyards, and the ships along the one and those building in the others were covered with people; and the mill-dam to the northward was swarming with them. Then, encircling all, and crowding in to the line drawn by the boats of the musketeers, were a hundred and fifty boats, and more. Back of these, stretching away to the Charlestown shore, lay vessels at anchor, many of them having swung into a new anchorage that those aboard, on deck and in the rigging, aye, aloft on the topmost yards, might see the pirates die.

Now when the gallows and the multitude — four thousand men, women, and children I have heard it estimated at — came into view, the rowers stopped, as the plan had been arranged, and Cotton Mather stood up in the stern of the boat to pray. He began in these words, that I have exact from our kinsman, John Campbell:

“ We have told you often that you have by sin undone yourselves; that you were born sinners; that you have lived sinners.

“ We have told you that there is a Saviour for sinners. We leave you in His merciful hands.”

At this, however, one of the men did cry out, loudly:

“ But where is the mercy of the men of New England, that we are to be hanged like dogs for doing what we were made to do? ”

There was a tremendous commotion in the multitude round about the pirates' boat, though what the fellow said was mere catch-stuff; for it was ever the ready pretence of a rogue, caught in those days with rovers and cutthroats for companions, that he had been an honest man till he had been tricked and seized by a pirate ship and made to take service.

Moreover, as I have said, there being much secret sympathy for pirates and piracy among many at this time, as well as the natural feeling in the crowd toward men whose pathway led to the gallows, there arose a murmuring as of approval of the man's words, and some one cried :

“ Aye, and why are not they hanged, too, that stay ashore and hire these men to do the black-flag business for them ? ”

Yet, as suddenly as the solemn ceremony was thus thrown into confusion, as suddenly was the disturbance abated, and a hush fell upon the crowd. For Cotton Mather stretched out his arms in a gesture of command ; and his eyes flashed the fire of indignation at this rude interruption of his invocation.

Burning with anger was he, yet his face was calm, and he stood, as stern and unmoved outwardly by the clamour of the people, as though he were a man of marble.

“ Stop ! ” he commanded. And the men in the boats that were accompanying far and near ceased their rowing. “ Let this unseemly and thoughtless outcry cease ! If there be one amongst you that dares applaud the words of this wicked man, let him come forth that I may look upon him. Let us see whosoever be the confederates in

spirit of these outlaws that have defied the commands of God and used His seas for sin!"

There was a moment of breathless silence and then the procession glided on, as Cotton Mather waved with his hand for the rowers to proceed, saying, sternly, "Let the judgment of God and of the law be carried out."

The rowers bent now to their oars, and the boat with the seven was drawn on to the very foot of the gallows, where a rude flight of steps went up to a platform. Here the boat was made fast by bow and stern, and the seven assisted out of it and up to the stage. One was half-carried up. His name was Francis King.

Then Cotton Mather, standing alone in the boat, in the shadow of the death-tree, exclaimed in a loud voice, that sounded far across the waters of the harbour:

"O Thou most great and glorious Lord! Thou art a righteous and a terrible God. Evil pursueth sinners. We have before us a dreadful demonstration of it. Oh, sanctify unto us a sight that has in it so much of the terror of the Lord.

"Oh, knock off the chains of death which are upon the souls of these men. Oh, snatch the prey out of the hands of the Terrible!"

When he had ended, the pirate captain, Quelch, vowed he had no fear of the gallows, but of the Great God and the Judgment Day. And all the others, except the man who called himself John Roach, were seemingly much moved, either by fear or remorse. This man's face I could not see clearly, but he stood erect, silent and scornful and hating all men.

It happened then, just as the ropes were being let down from the great beam, there came a reprieve for the man, King, and a great tumult of shouting and clapping and hurrahing arose on every hand; and, no doubt, those that had been as eager to see him die making the most noise, as is ever the way with the witless. But to see one of their number escape, seemed to make it harder for those that were to die; and, of them all, Quelch was the most angered and changed his demeanour most; for, as the pirate Lambert was warning the crowd to beware of bad company, Quelch cried out, scornfully:

“They should also take care how they bring money into New England, to be hanged for it.” Then he bowed, like an actor making a speech before the play begins; and, some of the others following his cue in a manner, it seemed as though the prayers and objurgations of the preachers had had but surface effect on the pirates, after all.

But the end came swiftly now, for there were white hoods drawn over the heads of the six, and their voices came thin and hollow through the cloth. A mist in my eyes half-shut out the dreadful thing that came to pass. I only knew that of a sudden the great platform shot from under the feet of the men, and a mighty screech went up from the throats of the four thousand on land and water, so that persons heard it a mile and more away in the streets of Boston. Then a dizziness came upon me and my brain was humming like a peg-top.

When I came to my senses, a boy in a boat near by was laughing as he gazed upon the gibbet and the men dangling in their chains. The boy was Elias.

CHAPTER IV

EPHRAIM'S WANDERINGS

WELL, when another day had passed and, by the morn of yet another, the pirates had been cut down and put away for ever, and boats going on up the Charles no longer pointed the glass in at the huge gallows and its warning to the wicked, six times repeated, our good town quieted itself once more; and the minds of men turned the leaves of the brain over quickly from that hideous chapter.

But for my cousin Ephraim was there no such thing as forgetfulness, in that the copy of the pirate's scrawl that I had made remained to haunt him through daylight and dark for days — aye, for a year or more — tantalizing him as though he had the magic ring or the lamp, that the tales of Arabia tell of, and knew not how to rub the thing to get the good out of it.

“And he said there was yellow money piled high, did he, Philip?” he would say ever and again, pausing at his hammering in the shop, while the golden glow of the iron died away to black on his anvil.

“Aye, that he did, Ephraim,” I would reply; “and enough to buy out our governor twice over.” And Ephraim would stand gazing stupidly at a corner of the room for minutes at a time; and then would seize sud-

denly upon the bellows, and blow the sparks and flame in a fierce blast up the chimney, and bring the yellow bar of iron out upon the anvil and hammer it like a madman.

Of secret meetings at our house there were many, and Elias's father and the others came to them. They got out what few maps we had, and they pored over these, and made their calculations, so many miles south and west, and so on, from this point of land and that. So that, by their figuring at guess-work, they variously located the treasure, now in Virginia, now at points in the Carolinas, and again farther south or north.

In the end, they were all disgusted at their own cupidity, and came even to jest over the matter and to quiz Cousin Ephraim about it; which he took most ill, being sore at heart and eaten up with craving for the money.

So it came about that Ephraim seemed to contract a sort of itch for treasure-seeking, from the handling of this paper, and neglected his work; till Cousin Mercy grew worried about him and spoke to Cotton Mather concerning it. Cotton Mather induced Ephraim to burn the paper, and he prayed and exhorted with Ephraim for the half of a day; and Ephraim vowed he would give over his folly and go about his business; but, in a few days, he had made another copy of the paper from memory — and, indeed, he knew it all by heart, but was afraid he might forget it — and the last state of his mind was even worse than the first, like the man in the Scriptures.

Then Ephraim's brain was like a shingle smeared with molasses, set to catch flies; and, though he by and by

gave up the paper in despair, every other rumour or story or tradition of buried treasure, of which there were great numbers, as there are yet to-day, stuck in his brain and buzzed there, and died only after a stinging and a pestering of Ephraim that set him to searching and to wandering.

There were coming constantly to our ears in those days, when our great coast had never a light set up to warn mariners off the shoals and hidden reefs all about, the reports of the wrecking of vessels here and there. Particularly was this true of the long bulwark of sand that shuts out the stormy sea from the waters of our bay. On the back of Cape Cod, on the seaward side, ever and again a fine ship piled in on the sand and went to pieces. And Cousin Ephraim had a mind to cruise out around the cape, along the treacherous shore, and hunt for wreckage.

I went along, as I always did on these treasure-hunting expeditions of Cousin Ephraim's; for I think he associated me with his schemes for finding gold, inasmuch as I had been the means, first, of setting him at it.

In the latter part of August, 1706, then, we set out, with two friends of Ephraim, in a sloop of twenty tons, and went around the cape to a harbour some miles below Eastham on the seaward side. While we were in this harbour, a storm arose and a bark was blown in on to the cape back of Eastham, and wrecked there. Early in the morning, when the storm fell away, Cousin Ephraim ran our sloop alongside the bark, which was not yet broken up. There was not a man alive in her, but plenty of merchandise and other stuffs; and we got a

cargo of this and set sail before other wreckers were about.

Now, it seemed, the town of Eastham was wroth over this, for we had been sighted from shore, and these wrecks were claimed by the town. So the stuff we got should have been taken before the town clerk and inventoried, and we might have had a share of it. But Cousin Ephraim knew naught of this, I am sure, and took no more than he thought he had a right to, deeming it only dead men's property and title thereto passing to him through the sea's devise. Nor did he deem it advisable to acquaint the authorities later that it was he who got the stuff, inasmuch as it might humiliate the fishermen that sighted us, not to have recognized a familiar sail; for we had a boat built in Provincetown.

Of the stuff we got from the bark, there were some fine Manchester velvets, slightly damaged by water; some India ginghams and brocaded silks; several dozen pairs of black silk mitts; some fine India taffeties and lawn. But of all the dress stuffs that most delighted the heart of Cousin Mercy — such be the odd vanities of women — there were a dozen pairs of silk stockings, that must have cost at least eight shillings a pair, and would have done for a countess. If it had not been for these, Cousin Mercy would have made Ephraim restore the stuff to the town of Eastham; but she put a seal on her lips, and wore the stockings to church on clear Sundays.

This, as I have said, was in the year 1706; and Ephraim and his friends and I went several times a-venturing

again in that and the next year; and in the year 1708, I having come of a great age — to wit, eleven — he took me on a long voyage with him to Haverhill. There were Ephraim, a man named James Hooper, Samuel Carver, Elbridge's brother, and I; and we set out in the latter part of July, to go cruising along the Massachusetts coast to the northward. We were to catch fish and salt them, do some trading, if we found any small party of Indians so inclined, and, on Ephraim's part, to inquire of his uncle, Captain Thomas Luce of Haverhill, a retired shipmaster, if he knew aught concerning the Blind Sisters and the Rock of the Four Seals. We had, also, some trifling commissions as to trading and bartering in that village.

We went along the coast, by Marblehead and Salem way, and landed, about the first of August, on Cape Ann, to the north of Gloucester. Thence we sailed on to a splendid river, the Monomac, and followed it some sixteen miles, nearly to the settlement of Haverhill. But there, on the 29th of August, we paused and turned us about in a great hurry; for there came a man running down to the shore who gave us tidings of the massacre of that place by the savages, early that morning. By his story there were near to forty men and women and children lying dead and scalped in the town, and several score wounded; and he begged us to bear the news in haste back to Boston, that aid might be sent.

Down the river we sailed, then, with as much canvas as we could crowd on to our little vessel, and gave the news to the people of Cape Ann, whence it went on to

Boston before us by a swifter vessel. So that when we had come home, the whole town was astir and aghast with the horror of it.

Cousin Mercy said it was a Providence that Ephraim had not been scalped; yet would it have been near a miracle had the thing been accomplished, inasmuch as Ephraim's head for the upper half of it had naught by which a savage could lift his scalp; and had he lain upon the ground an Indian would have passed him by, thinking that another had been before him.

Burning with wrath were the men of Boston to avenge the massacre of Haverhill, and through all the New England colonies was there a setting out of men to give back a blow, with interest. But the wilderness claimed its own, and gave to its savage men the like protection and covert that it gives to the beasts that hunt and are hunted; and so the savages dispersed into the forests, and some were killed, but more escaped; and it was not till three years had gone by that our Mother Country made any strong move to clear the whole matter up, with a blow struck at the French, into the bargain.

Then, in the year 1711, there came over a grand fleet, that should tear the very rocks of Quebec asunder, and blot out the stronghold of the Canadas from the face of the earth. It was, indeed, a sight to do men good, and our town of Boston had never beheld the like before; for there sailed in, one day in June, fifteen huge men-of-war, belching flame and smoke to mark their coming. And behind these there followed two score troop-ships, with an army of five thousand men aboard.

Then, for a time, was there a great ado in and about our town; for there was a splendid dinner at the house of our governor; and the admiral of the fleet, Sir Hovenden Walker, and Brigadier-General Hill, commander-in-chief of all her Majesty's forces in North America, and a great number of officers in lace and gold, with swords clanging about their legs, were escorted there as guests of honour. The high officials of our colony and several of the rich merchants of Boston were invited, too, to meet them. Elias's father, Squire Andrews, was one of these, and had the honour of shaking the great officers' hands and of making a speech, over the wine.

Now this event, it happened, was the first of the breaking between Elias and me; for it had the effect of putting his nose very high in the air. Indeed, at this time, he put on so many fine and dandyish manners, and wore such good clothes, that there was no longer a common ground for us to stand on. Withal, he made it clear that he was the better of us, which Cousin Mercy said was true, as his father was a great and influential man. But I think that Ephraim did not agree with her.

Yet, to be fair, perhaps the real reason was that Elias was grown almost to manhood, being now seventeen; while I was still a boy at fourteen. He was, moreover, old in the ways of the world at his age, and I was young for mine, being still up to tricks that Cousin Mercy said I should be ashamed of. And Elias spoke most patronizingly to me when we did meet — which was seldom — so that it seemed to me I must have played at Captain Kidd and pirating with some one else, and not he. More-

over, he had been tutoring in the languages, while I had had but common schooling and reading of my father's books; and, to be honest, he was rather a handsome fellow, and the women took notice of him. But I was afraid to speak to them.

However, it chanced one day that I came upon Elias down by the Battery, and he wore a sort of half-uniform that was very smart and elegant. He told me then—and he seemed to be ten years older than I, instead of three—that his father had got him some *petty* commission (he did not call it a *petty* commission) aboard one of the great war-ships, and that he was going to help whip the French. I think I was in a measure ashamed at that moment of being still so young, and my head so full of boyish nonsense; and I made a sort of resolution to become a man, too, and put away childish things—but I could never keep it.

Well, the day, long delayed, came at last, and a great procession went down through the town, to see the fleet set sail, and to say farewell to our two New England regiments that were to ally themselves with the five thousand men from the Old Country. Squire Andrews and his wife rode down in a fine carriage, with Elias, in his uniform, sitting up proudly. Then, all at once, just as Squire Andrews was speaking with an officer of the ship on which Elias was to sail, and Elias was standing by, feeling of the place where his moustache would come—but had not—there ran out of the crowd on the wharf a young girl of the town, named Delia Edgerly, and she carried an infant, wrapped in a shawl, in her

arms. She seized Elias and begged him to go away with her and marry her, as he had promised, and not sail off to be killed.

At this there was a great commotion, and the crowd closed in about them. There was the girl, pale-faced and crying; and Elias's father purple-veined and raging and half crazed with mortification; and Elias standing, stupidly, not looking the girl, nor any one else, in the face; nor ever a word to say.

Then, it seemed, the officer of the ship and Squire Andrews conferred together for a moment, and soon afterward the former declared in a stern voice that Elias was under commission to the queen, and the boat was waiting to take him to the ship. With that, Elias was hurried away and got aboard the vessel.

As for the young woman, the squire took her, fainting, into the carriage with himself and his wife; and they drove hurriedly away, nor waited to wave farewell to Elias. Moreover, was there little heard of the matter thereafter, for the young woman left the town aboard a ship bound to New York; and it was rumoured that Squire Andrews paid her a great sum to get her to go away.

As for this mighty invasion of Canada, it was full of sound and fury and brilliant in its promise. Fine, indeed, did the great ships look as they unrolled their clouds of sail and went on majestically out of the harbour on a July day, amid the flashing of guns and the thunderings thereof, and in the glory of the sunlight. Sorry, indeed, did they look, cast away, a dozen of them, on the gray

ledges of the St. Lawrence, grinding their keels into the sand and rocks; dim, gloomy shadows of ships in the fogs that enwrapped them all about; with the winds whistling through their deserted rigging and the fish of the river swimming in and out of their shattered hulls.

CHAPTER V

A MESS OF TROUT FOR BLACKBEARD

FOR the next half-dozen years of my life, cast in quiet places, there is little use to throw the net therein; for I find coming up in the meshes naught of consequence and no good fish.

I do recall of my twentieth year, I having just turned nineteen, that I am grown of good size, and strong, though not bulky, and apply for a place on the night-watch. Cousin Mercy likes not the hours; but I am earning my own living now, and seeking to get more of learning than it is easy to pay for; and, by this duty at night, and cutting off an hour of sleep in the day, I make a good day of it in study.

In the early fall, or late summer, of the year 1716, Cousin Ephraim was of a mind to embark in the business of fishing for the Boston market. Having some fifty odd pounds of capital at hand to put into the same, he got him a small sloop of about five tons, at a shipyard in the town, and rigged her over and equipped her for the enterprise. He shipped as crew: Elbridge Carver, because he was a handy lad about a boat, a man by the name of Wainwright, who now and again went sea voyages and could serve as cook, and myself.

Cousin Ephraim had a brother-in-law living then at Eastham, some dozen or more miles up the cape from Provincetown, by the name of Silas Tetherton. He, too, had a small fishing business of his own, with a dock, and a storehouse for the salting and packing of fish. So, with Brother Silas, Cousin Ephraim struck up a sort of copartnership to supply the good people of Boston with fish.

Well, we had made several voyages, and the sloop, the *West Wind* by name, had about paid for itself, and my cousin Ephraim was slapping his pocket for his good fortune, when we got bad news; and it was, that the pirates were back about our coast.

The years from 1716 to 1718 bred such a pest of these buccaneers that it seemed as though the sea spawned them, as it does the sharks and the devil-fish. Now there were decks running red with blood all the way from Maine to the Carolinas and from thence to the Spanish Islands. Everywhere were captains and crews of honest merchant-men skulking in fear of the black flag, and turning and running for dear life from every strange sail that came in sight.

Now my cousin having a staunch boat, that was as good as new, and new tackle and fittings, and always some ten pounds of money for the purchase of fish, or else a cargo aboard, was much averse to meeting with any pirate. So we were wont to cruise alongshore, to and from the end of the cape, although we lost time in doing so, having to describe a long half-circle instead of laying a straight course.

Thus it went along without our being once interfered with, because of our great caution, up to the latter part of September, when we fell into adventure.

My cousin got word, from a ketch that had run in past the cape, that a fine ship was cruising about near the end of the land; and that it had laid a course for the ketch and fired two guns to stop her, but she ran away from the ship as night came on. This was ugly news for Cousin Ephraim, for there was a load of fish waiting for him on the dock at Eastham, and no better for the market for their keeping, and soon would no longer pass for fresh, unless one held the nose, and must be salted at less profit.

We left Boston harbour one afternoon, then, and ran down to a cove some ten miles from Eastham, not far from Plymouth, sailing alongshore where no pirate would dare to go. Here we lay overnight at anchor in a secluded place, intending to steal quietly alongshore the next day at sunrise. But the day was without a flickering of life from any wind. Then, in the next night, there came up a fog that held us for two days more.

The country round about where we lay at anchor was not unknown to me. So, on the second day of our tarrying, I got my cousin to let Elbridge Carver and me go off ashore in our dory. Then we went back inland to a place I knew of, and took some two score big perch out of a clear pond, of rocky bottom; and, from a little stream that ran into it, a dozen fine trout.

Whether the sight of these fish, fresh from the water and still wriggling a protest against the fry-pan, reminded Cousin Ephraim of those fish waiting for us on the dock

at Eastham, I am not sure; but, at least, we had no sooner come aboard with them, than my cousin vowed he would up anchor and start for Brother Silas Tetherton's, fog or no fog; for he allowed he could lay a compass course that would fetch us there. So we made sail forthwith, since to argue with Cousin Ephraim was like unto pulling a pig by the leg.

I have naught to say against Cousin Ephraim's seamanship on this day; but I do know that, by some variance, we got farther out from land than we had any of us thought, and were nearer two miles from shore when we believed we were but one.

Then of a sudden we heard the click of oars in oar-locks, and the sound of voices; and we sat still and listened, peering anxiously through the fog, though we could see nothing. The voices, too, ceased, and I fancied they were listening for us. Next, a ship's long-boat, with near a dozen men, came vaguely into view, and a stern voice called on us to bring up and take them aboard.

But Cousin Ephraim had been no laggard and, at the first sight of the big boat and the strange men, had thrown our sloop off the wind, so that they caught but a glimpse of us before we had the fog between us again, for a curtain. Now the long-boat, with six lusty fellows rowing, shot after us and would have caught us, for the wind was light, but that Cousin Ephraim had cunningly jibed about and was beating back on his old course again.

We should have got well clear and, already, had the long-boat safely passed, when the fog played us a trick and there we were in a trap. Here was a fog-bank, it

seemed, of a mile square perhaps, that had wandered in from sea, like a few sheep gone astray from the big flock, and was lingering, as though browsing lazily on the sea-hillocks, for a herding breeze to chase it back to the fold. Now there came a smart and nipping wind, and away it scampered and left the coast and bay clear once more, with the sun shining on the water; and there, not twenty rods away, a fine ship rode at anchor, with scores of men swarming about the decks.

It was all up with us then, for they gave us a shot that sent the water flying aboard, and Cousin Ephraim made haste to run up alongside. There, a hundred evil faces looked sneeringly down at us, and my knees were wobbling so that I stood against the deck-house to give them support, and tried to whistle, to keep up my courage, but couldn't.

Now as we came astern of the great ship and made fast a line heaved to us, a huge, black shaggy head appeared over the rail; and a man of great stature, broad-shouldered and with a deep voice, bade us tell who we were, and what we had aboard, and whence we came, and where we were bound, and what vessels we had seen, and what ships we knew of bound this way — all in one question; so that it made my head swim, as it did Cousin Ephraim's.

Poor Cousin Ephraim was in a cold sweat of fear, and I saw the drops course down his face; he being anxious for his vessel and, worse still, dreading impression into the ship's crew. He stammered and stuttered so, that the great black-faced man looked blacker still, and gave orders to have us brought aboard; and that looked bad,

for we thought he would never trouble to set us back on the *West Wind* again.

Cousin Ephraim was taken from his vessel half out of his wits, while Elbridge Carver and Wainwright made the best of it, yet feared the worst. But when I had gotten my knees under control, with the friendly backing of the deck-house, and had bethought me that a pirate, or any other man, would see more to fancy in a brave man than in a coward, I plucked up a great store of courage, and, along with it, a bit of cunning; for I slipped down into the galley, and took from off a chunk of ice the twelve fat trout that I had pulled from the stream that afternoon, knowing what a man has to feed on aboard ship and how he welcomes a fresh morsel of grub.

Aft they brought Cousin Ephraim and the rest of us, when we had been taken aboard the pirate ship, Cousin Ephraim in the lead, as the owner of the *West Wind*, and I last.

Then the great black giant strode across the quarter-deck, and roared out in a terrible voice that he was Teach, the pirate, whom some called Blackbeard; and that a man that lied to him had better never been born, for he would have him quartered and fed to the dogfish; which rather stiffened the spine of Cousin Ephraim a bit, for he roused up and vowed that he lied to no man — which was, indeed, true, barring an occasional variance from the strictest fact in the matter of the age of fish, and which is not to be reckoned against him, seeing it be in the course of business.

This Teach — for he was, in truth, no less than the

great Edward Teach, or some say Thatch — was in wait for a good merchantman, the *Ellis Rich*, bound out of Boston for foreign ports, with both cargo and money, and he would have news of her. But my Cousin Ephraim could tell him nothing of the vessel, which was, perhaps, a lapse of memory due to the fact that he had some two hundred pounds of hard-earned savings put out at investment in her. And this dulness on the part of Ephraim threw Captain Teach into a fit of passion.

“ Well, what have you aboard your own coffin, you blockhead? ” he bellowed. “ Come! out with it! A bit of money for trading, I’ll swear. If you can’t, or won’t, give us news of the *Rich*, I’ll make you poor. Ha! ha! Did you hear that, Ed Grace? ” And he turned to one of the mates. “ We’ll make him poor, eh? Aye, that we will, and by the loss of his fishing-tub, too.”

“ Here you, mate, ” he cried, fiercely, waving one of his big arms to another man, “ get the stuff out of that boat, anything we want, and we’ll make a beacon of her; something to light us against another fog.”

Then Cousin Ephraim found his tongue in a hurry and begged hard for his boat, saying he would produce ten pounds in money from a locker aboard, which was all he had.

Now it chanced that the pirates had lately seized a Spanish ship with gold-dust aboard, and had more money in their ship, coming to them, than they had present opportunity to spend; but were looking for a good cargo of provisions, with liquors and delicacies. So the offer of my cousin’s paltry ten pounds brought

Teach for the moment from a passion into a good humour.

“Ten pounds he offers us, Ed Grace, as a bribe!” he bawled. “Ha! ha! What say you, master mate, to a share of ten pounds, to be fairly divided among captain and crew, each in the usual lotting? Ten pounds prize-money to share with Poll in Charleston! Will it be enough, think you, to keep her till next voyage is over?”

Then the great Blackbeard laughed, with a cruel light in his eyes, and turned and looked us over, as a cat might look at mice.

“And what might you offer, lout?” he cried, leering at me over the heads of the others. “You be a brawny Calvinist, with a dunnage-box of birch bark under your arm, with a week’s wages and a slop-shop change of fine linen in it, I’ll swear. What have you to offer for your sloop and the good-will of Captain Teach?”

“A dozen fresh trout for your supper,” said I, making a bold face of it and handing out my catch of pretty fish for him to look at.

“By God!” he cried. “You shall go free for that! Fresh, spotted fellows, from the clear leaping water aback in shore. Ah, I know the places where they hide, and have caught them, too, in old England, and broken a warden’s head into the bargain. ’Tis a dish fit for the good king that I loyally serve and for whom I adjust many wrongs, in that I take from the rich and give to my poor sailors.”

“Here, fool,” he added, turning to Cousin Ephraim, “here’s a bit of fifty odd pounds, to put with your ten,

and you shall share it with this young man whom you call cousin. Now get you gone, the pack of you, and mind you give no warning in Boston town of Edward Teach, lest I fall in with you again."

So he would have dismissed us all, and we had made haste to get away; when, of a sudden, he turned to me again — for he was a man of quick impulse, whose brain worked by a series of flashes.

"Hold!" he cried. "All of you. A dish fit for his Gracious Majesty, the king, is worth repeating; and fresh trout do not come aboard every day. We will set you ashore, my man, and you shall catch us some more. And see that you are a lucky fisherman, for your own good and that of your worthy cousin and friends, lest, an you did not return, we should fain fish, ourselves, with their carcasses for bait."

It was mid-afternoon when this curious thing happened, and I found myself alone at the tiller of the *West Wind*, with my Cousin Ephraim and the others watching, ruefully, as I sailed away. It was a half-hour's run, with a light wind, in to the land, and an hour's tramp to the pool where I had made my best hauls in the afternoon; so that it was near to sundown when I got my line into the water.

Now, too, I got a sorry taste of the coquetry and fickleness of fine fish; for, whereas I have got perch and other stolid swimmers out of the same hole by the hour, and that as often as I chose to make a call, these dainty trout flaunted their bright colours in swift flashings before my eyes, but would not deign to accept of my most tempting offerings.

The sun began to roll below the hills, and the shadows blackened farther across the pools. The birds no longer sang in the bushes, and I saw night was upon me. Then I waded out of the pool and sank down in my wet clothes by the shore, on a little bank, and fell asleep. Now and again I awakened, shivering, through the night, and fell off to sleep again, dreaming that the great pirate, Teach, was lifting his black, shaggy head from out the pool where I had cast for trout, glaring at me with murder in his eyes.

I was awake before the sun was up, and went farther up the stream, whipping it with nervous hand, eager as a schoolboy after his first fish. Then when I hooked one, a fat fellow of a half-pound weight, I threw him out with such a jerk that he went flying among the alders, and landed in another bend of the stream and swam free again. So I had to learn the old, old lesson over once more, that to do one's best one must not let eagerness devour him, but keep the brain cool and the hand steady.

Then I fished better and with more success, only I dared not stop at a dozen fish, after being so long time gone, but felt I must give Pirate Teach good catch or we should all suffer.

When the sun covered nearly all the stream, and the fish would no more come darting from the shady places, I threw away my alder pole, wrapped my shining catch — more beautiful than pirate treasure — away from the heat, in bark lined with fresh moss, and ran, through swamp and wood, back to shore.

When I had made sail on the sloop and stood out of the cove, I could see the pirate ship nearly two miles out,

still at anchor. Then my heart leaped with joy. But I was even then nigh too late, for it seemed Teach had vowed I had deserted them, and, shortly before I came in sight, he ordered them seized and fastened, each with a band about his waist, and hoisted aloft in that horrid fashion, my cousin to the fore peak, Elbridge Carver to the main, and Wainwright to the mizzen peak. There I saw them dangling, nearly dead, as I ran alongside, but with life enough to cry out faintly and groan, so that I heard them as I came on deck of the pirate.

Captain Teach had vowed they should hang there till the sea-birds devoured them, dead or alive; but when I had brought him my catch, and he had looked at the beautiful fish and handled them and gloated over their shining spots and their fatness, he changed of a sudden, as he was wont to do, and vowed it was but a joke, his hanging of the others aloft, and laughed and ordered them to be taken safely down.

“ You seem a likely youth,” he said, looking me in the eyes, “ and you have a fine mess of fish, fit for the king — yes, fit, too, for his loyal subject, Edward Teach. And you shall stay and dine with me on these same trout. As for these others,” meaning Cousin Ephraim and Elbridge and Wainwright, “ let them be put aboard their vessel.”

So my cousin Ephraim and the others were bundled aboard the *West Wind* once more, to await the pirate’s pleasure in letting me depart.

As for the banquet at Captain Teach’s table, it seems to me more like something I have read, or heard tell of,

than that it actually happened. But I remember Teach sat at the head of a great swinging table of mahogany, with some seven or eight of his officers, and myself at the foot. Though a pirate ship, the vessel had once been a rich merchantman, trading to the Indies; and the cabin where we ate was trimmed in rich, dark woods, with ivory and pearl inlayings, and the finest of silk and lace curtains and cushions on all sides.

As for the table service, it was finer than I had ever dreamed of; as, indeed, it might well be, for a dozen and more ships had been despoiled and looted to furnish it; and there was massy gold and silver plate, and cups and saucers richly worked and chased, and lamps of precious metals to light us as we ate.

It seemed most strange to me — for I had thought such elegant things were mostly for the women — to see the fingers of this great, swarthy pirate glittering with gems, and a gold chain encircling his neck and dangling upon his breast beneath his shaggy, black beard. His dress, too, was such as I had never seen upon man before; for it was soft and fine, like a woman's, and brilliant as to colouring.

I did not know of what rich cloth was his coat, but his crimson doublet was of a costly damask, and his breeches were of the same stuff. Two enormous pistols in his belt were the most to my fancy, however, for they were mounted in gold, and had each an emerald set into the stock, and a great letter "T" in silver and mother-of-pearl cleverly worked into each handle.

First, we drank each a small tumbler of raw brandy —

and I had never tasted any such hot, burning liquor before, but only on Thanksgiving Day a glass of Jamaica rum well diluted — and I wept as though I had lost a season's fishing pay as the stuff seared my throat; but no one saw it, for they were drinking other liquors by the time I had taken my first swallow.

Great Teach, the biggest, and I think perhaps the most powerful man I ever saw, save Will Endicott — of whom later — rose up at the first of the feeding and offered a health to King George in a goblet of wine; and the goblet was of some shining crystal, elaborated by cunning workmanship in silver and gold. Then the table of carousers stood up in mock solemnity and bellowed out a cheer for his Gracious Majesty.

Yet it turned out, not a fortnight later, that they boarded a king's ship and slaughtered half the crew. But it seemed a favourite jest of Blackbeard, the pirate, knowing himself what a rogue he was, to swear himself at all times a loyal subject of the king; and ever with a grave face, or his smile, if he ever did smile, hidden deep in his bushy beard.

Now and again this man, Teach, would speak most strangely for a captain of such rascals as these, just a sentence it might be, that none there could see through save myself, who had had books to read; and by which I saw he had not been born a tarry villain, but had mixed with better company. Indeed, later, after he had been killed, fighting, there came out something of his history which showed him to have been a Bristol born man of excellent breeding; and at this very day, at the height

of his infamy, he was hand and glove with the wealthy Carolina planters and a welcome guest at their tables.

The pretty, speckled trout that I had brought aboard, some two score, had been served up with their heads on, and their bulldog, undershot jaws fiercely distended, through a device of the cook's, who was pleased to humour Teach. They had, indeed, looked a dish fit for the king; for they lay all on a huge platter of solid silver, so heavy that the corded muscles stood out on the arms of the man that brought it on; and we had eaten of these and other foods, and there had been rare wine enough poured out for a school of fish to swim in, when there came to our ears the low rumble of thunder back in the hills.

On the instant, the great Teach sprang up and looked wildly about as though he had heard the guns of a king's seventy-four. Again the thunder pealed, and heavier and sharper, for the lightning storm was coming swiftly upon us. At this the room rang with curses from Teach, and his eyes blazed like a madman's.

“Up anchor!” he roared. “Clear the decks for action. Get her under way! No man shall ever say Edward Teach was fired on and refused to give battle, though the odds be an hundred to one.”

Whether this were ever a clever counterfeit of dare-devilry on the man's part, to strike awe into his scoundrelly crew, or whether it were that the thunder and lightning really wrought a sudden madness in him, no one ever knew; but certain it was that if ever a man seemed maddened by the terrors of the heavens that man was Edward Teach.

Now, as the sky blackened over our heads, and the bolts of living fire flashed down from the heavens and buried themselves in the sea, and the thunder rolled frightfully, the pirate Teach rushed into his cabin and seized a naked cutlass in one hand, while with the other he grasped a pistol, and ran out on deck with them.

The squalls of rain beat furiously upon the ship, which scudded out to sea with all the canvas they dared put on her, and with Teach yelling frantically for them to crowd on more. It seemed as though the man were crazed with terror and was of a mind to die fighting to the last; for, as often as the lightning flashed and the thunder pealed, he had the heavy cannon of the ship run out and fired in the teeth of the storm, volley of cannon-shot to answer the artillery of the sky. And all the while he raged and stormed about the quarter-deck, and slashed at the railings and roundhouse with his cutlass and fired his pistols, cursing and blaspheming in a manner most horrible to hear.

Whether it were feigned or real, certain it was no man dared go near him then — at least, since he had lopped one fellow from collar-bone to middle with a cutlass blow in one of these frenzies.

Take it all in all, if ever there was a hell on the seas, it was this ship of the pirate Teach in a storm of lightning; for it seemed every moment to be rushing to destruction, with canvas spread to the gale that should have been furled; and the vessel heeling over frightfully at every fierce squall; then the lightning and the awful

thunder, and the madness of Teach, and the horrid blasphemies of the whole pirate crew — all under the blackness as of midnight.

The ship ran on in this wild course until Teach had worn himself out with fury, and with such drinking as would have put to never-ending sleep any other mortal man. Then, when the crew had seen him fall, like a dead man, on the deck, in a drunken stupor, they made haste to get sail off the ship and run her back toward her anchorage, reefed close. Later, when they dared, his mates dragged the senseless giant down to his cabin, and laid him in his bunk, and put his cutlass and pistols away.

In all this crazy performance I was half-way between terror and laughter; for the great fool ran about like a man in a play, only it were no joke to encounter him; and, in all, it was a wicked, horrible thing to see. But, while I looked on from behind a water-butt, in safety, I was most concerned as to whether we should ever come back to port again. It chanced, however, that they had business there and must come back of their own accord, else I had gone a-voyaging against my will.

They were willing enough to let me go ashore the next day. Teach, himself, came on deck, dressed with much care, and showing little of the effects of the carouse save a bruise or two. And he took the breath out of me when he pulled from his sash and gave to me a great gold watch, with a finely linked gold chain dangling from it, and on this chain a curious sort of locket. With this gift, I was set aboard the *West Wind*, which had come out to meet us; and that was the last I saw of the pirate Teach, for he was

slain two years later; though not the last I saw of some of his treasures, as you may learn if I can keep my quill in action to set it down in its proper place.

Then on the way to Eastham in the *West Wind* it chanced that, in handling the locket that depended from the chain, I touched upon a hidden spring, and the locket opened — to my astonishment; for so ingeniously had it been devised by its artificer that, in the ornamentation and elaboration of it, both its spring and hinges were hidden. There, looking sweetly out, her eyes gazing into mine, was a woman's face painted in miniature on ivory. It was a wonderful face, full of a winsomeness and a light that seemed to come both from the hazel eyes and from the golden-brown, shining hair. It was a woman of middle age, handsome, refined, matronly; and it drew me as though it had been my own mother's that I had never seen.

This face I never saw before, nor have I ever seen it — and yet have I seen it often. And the riddle is not hard to read.

CHAPTER VI

THE WRECKING OF BELLAMY

BEING well clear of the pirate ship and standing in toward the harbour of Eastham, and Ephraim and the others having recovered in a measure from the soreness and sickness caused by their lofty elevation, at masthead, we began to see some interest in the adventure. For here was Ephraim with fifty pounds of yellow money that would make good many cartloads of fish spoiling for lack of a market; and of this he gave five pounds each to the others of us.

And for me, there was the great golden timepiece ticking in my pocket — for I was as eager as a boy to have it going — and a chain slipped through the buttonhole of my waistcoat that a solid London merchant might have paid ten pounds for; and the locket, with the sweet face looking out at me, lifelike.

This, in truth, did have such a fascination in my eyes, though I had made love to no woman, and knew not that I could ever grow sentimental, that I looked at it often and again, till Ephraim and the others began to poke fun at me for being smitten with a woman's face painted on ivory.

Somehow, I could see no fun in their bantering, but it

seemed a lack of courtesy and manliness in Ephraim and them to make sport of so refined and high a lady; and I should have answered Ephraim sharply, but I had respect for his gray hairs that would come in a few years below his baldness. So I shut the locket, nor opened it any more when they were by.

Now had this face within the locket been looking away from me, or of a beauty coldly classical, I doubt not it would have interested me only to glance at it and wonder, perchance, whosoever she might be, and how the pirate had come by the locket that held her; but, as often as I did open the golden door, there were her wonderful brown eyes looking straight into mine — not staring nor bold, but calm and with a sweet self-possession, as of a woman loving and sympathetic, but a courage and thoughtfulness and a gentle dignity blended therewith.

This face did, indeed, draw me most strongly, so that I found a comfort and a helpfulness in looking upon it; and, inasmuch as she might have claimed me for a son, being of sufficient years older than I, there surely was no harm, and nothing for me to be ashamed of, in feeling ever her sweet presence about me and looking upon her lovingly.

However, this came about by degrees, after I had worn the locket for a long time and there had been a sort of companionship between us — and perhaps the romance of getting her from a pirate ship was also an influence. In the meantime, here we were nearing Eastham, and Ephraim was picking up, one by one, the familiar objects on sea and land that guided him past the shallows

and out of the reach of the slimy fingers of the reefs that itched to fasten upon us.

By and by we came in close under the land; and then the way to the dock was to run in for a half-mile or more, winding at length in and about the channel of a creek. There on the dock was Brother Silas Tetherton, sour in the face as though he had eaten green cherries; for the good cargo of fresh fish he had had for market was long gone stale, and he had been forced to split and salt them in a hurry, for which there was less money. Moreover, he was a little weazened man, dried up like a fish that has shrivelled and sun-dried on the shore, after the sea has cast it beyond the reclaiming of the tide. So he did not improve in looks with his disappointment.

But Ephraim interested him greatly with the story of our adventure, and vowed that Brother Silas had fared better than we, not having been slung up to masthead by his middle; to which Brother Silas did assent, Cousin Ephraim having forgot to make mention of the pirate's gift of fifty pounds, and we not reminding him, it being nothing of our business.

However, as Cousin Ephraim had been commissioned by Brother Silas to buy for him a quantity of tobacco in Boston, and had brought it with him, he would take no money for this, but let it stand for a present. Brother Silas marvelled at his generosity, and the more so when he had tried the tobacco and found it of excellent quality, and not wormy.

This voyage, reckoning the gift from Captain Teach, was the beginning of some considerable prosperity for

Cousin Ephraim. He therefore set up a permanent market in the lower part of the town of Boston and bought and sold fish, as well as sending out his own sloop to Eastham and other fishing stations along the inner rim of the cape.

Then it happened that there came into his market one day a tall bearded fellow, not well dressed, but with what had once been fine clothes waning toward seediness, and the air of gentlemanliness about him. He besought Ephraim for a chance to ship in his sloop for fishing trips, as he could handle a boat, and had no other means of employment, not knowing any trade and not hankering for other labour. So Ephraim gave Elias Andrews — for he it was — employment, being sorry for him after he had heard his story.

It seemed that after the fine fleet of Admiral Walker had come to grief, Elias had gone over on one of the surviving vessels to England, having the influence of some high officials, through his father, to advance him in the navy. But something had happened — we never did know just what it was — that put Elias out of the navy, in spite of those that favoured him.

Now it may not have been Elias's fault at all, for I do know of the many bitter jealousies and favouritisms in his Majesty's service on land and sea in years back; and, indeed, Elias swore there was a trick put upon him to set him in a false light. Certain it is, however, Elias came back with no honours scored on his slate, and Squire Andrews was in a bad humour over it, but put Elias to work in his shipping house.

Then they quarrelled, and I set down here none of the rumours of it, since I be telling only what I know to be fact, and have no desire for talebearing. Elias set out to earn for himself, but had no great stomach for hard work, and had got along after a fashion, on money his mother sent to him, till Squire Andrews heard of that, and put a stop to it, wishing, he said, to bring Elias to his senses.

And to show the humour of many townsmen toward Elias, when he went to ask aid of them, I may make mention of a saying we had in those days and which I, myself, heard one of them use in speaking of him. It had reference to the young woman who had claimed Elias on the day he embarked for the Canadas, and expressed what some thought regarding him. The saying, or aphorism, was to the effect that, even as an oak-tree does not bear an oak till it has had the maturity of twenty years, so should not a man beget a child till he be of that age. I mention this, not as necessarily agreeing with it hard and fast, but merely as indicating the feeling in this particular case.

However, Ephraim was willing to give Elias a chance, and it is but fair to say that he took hold right well and did his share of the work with us. He was, moreover, a very companionable fellow to have aboard, now that he had no more fine airs about him, having many stories to tell of life aboard the king's ships, and going back now and again, in a good-humoured way, to the days of our pirating on the ponds.

So we went a number of cruises together down Eastham way, Elias and I and Elbridge and Wainwright, in the boat; till, finally, having the business well established,

and taking a fancy to the town of Eastham, we four got a permit and knocked together a cabin over back in the hills, a half-mile from shore, and lived there, part of the time, going on fishing trips out of the harbour and carrying our cargo on to Ephraim's market at intervals. Indeed, we were so taken with the place that we spent the winter in that town.

Now I am to pass on quickly to events more stirring; but I am reminded of one thing I did, some months after this, when the land was still shivering in the late March winds, but the bays and coves were open to let our boat pass in and out. And that is, I found it were not fitting for a man doing rough work, as I was, and drenched often by the sea and rain, to wear a golden watch, like a rich man riding in his carriage, or a merchant in his counting-room. So I took mine off one day and put it into the iron strong-box in Ephraim's office, trusting to the sun not to deceive me as to the time of day, as in years gone by.

But as for the locket, I was in no mind to part with that, for reasons that I have given; and so I divorced it from its golden chain and hung it about my neck. Then, for convenience' sake — and I asked my sweet lady's pardon for doing it — I enclosed the pirate's paper within the locket, and took a foolish notion into my head, for a time, that she would be as an enchantress and good fairy to guide me to the fortune that lay hidden in its writing.

It was, as I recollect, the 15th day of April of this next year, 1717, and along about the middle of the afternoon, that we heard in the town of Eastham the booming of three guns; and the sound came in over the hills from the

outside of the cape. There were no clouds in the sky, so it could not be thunder; and, indeed, my cousin Ephraim, who had come with us a trip to see Brother Silas Tetherton, knew in a minute that it was the pirates.

I remember how he sprang out of the cabin, and stood peering anxiously in the direction whence the sounds of the shots came, though there were some three miles of sand-hills between us and the sea, and put his hand to his better ear to catch anything more.

Then Brother Silas rowed up alongside in his dory, and, "Did you hear that?" he asked.

"Aye, Silas," answered my cousin. "They're abroad here again. I wonder if it be Teach."

"God knows; and I hope they don't get near the town," said Brother Silas.

When we came in, about sunset, the whole town was set by the ears; for there had rowed in on the seaward shore, and tramped over to the town, two men who, it seemed, had been set off from aboard ship by the pirates.

Then we learned that the dreaded Bellamy was off the town, lying a mile from shore, outside the cape, in wait for vessels.

You have heard much of Kidd, because he bore a king's commission; and of Teach, who, indeed, could have taught Kidd the very A-B-C's of piracy; but as for Bellamy, he outmatched the two in cunning and daring. Yet few there be that know of him now, for he was born for drowning, and not for the gallows; and the sands of Cape Cod erased his name quickly from the roll of infamy.

Well, here was Captain Samuel Bellamy with a fleet of

three ships off our coast, and wanting a harbour badly; for his own ship, the *Whidah*, that mounted over a score of guns and carried 130 as thorough scoundrels as ever sailed under the skeleton, was beginning to make some water.

This fleet of three had, we learned, taken, this afternoon, a vessel from Eastham harbour, a sloop of sixty tons, and having no need of two of the crew, who were not strong men, had set them ashore.

At this news, a terror spread through the town, for if the pirate fleet ever made our harbour it had us all at its mercy with its great guns. But soon we were in a worse state. In the morning following, there was more firing; and, later, there came flying into the harbour a fisherman that had sailed past the pirate fleet, and had seen them stand on and hold up still two other vessels, one of them a snow of about seventy tons.

“She would likely be the snow *Prudence Taylor*,” said Cousin Ephraim, “for she was due out of Provincetown this day. A good vessel she be, too, and I trust no harm may come to Captain Jonathan Taylor, than whom no better skipper hails from the cape.”

“Aye, that he be,” said several that heard my cousin. “He be smart, too, and may show the pirate a trick, if it so chance he may.”

So it chanced, in truth, and came about this way:

When Captain Jonathan Taylor had found his vessel boarded, and himself carried off to the *Whidah* by a boat’s crew of Bellamy’s men, and was taken aft on the big ship for Bellamy to glare at and cross-question, he

answered up smart and prompt, and was not afraid of the whole shipful. The pirate saw that here was a man he might make use of, taking a fancy to him for his courage.

“Do you know the coast and harbours hereabouts?” asked Bellamy.

“Like my own dooryard,” answered Jonathan Taylor.

“Will you pilot us into Cape Cod harbour (meaning Provincetown), if I will give you back your vessel?”

“I will sail my own snow in and show you the way,” said Jonathan Taylor, asking the Lord’s forgiveness under his breath, for he was a good Christian man and would tell no lie — excepting under dire necessity, to pirates or Indians.

“Then you shall have your boat,” said Bellamy, “though I man her with more of my own men to outnumber yours, that you may not give me the slip; for I think you are a clever dog, for all your sanctimonious face. When we are in Cape Cod harbour, you shall sail out scot-free; and the town shall not suffer at our hands.”

So the upshot was, that Captain Jonathan Taylor got back to his own quarter-deck, with his own crew, and a dozen pirates to see that the snow did not escape.

When Captain Jonathan went aboard, he gave out the good news that none was to be harmed and that they should soon sail free; and he ordered a cask of West India rum to be got up and opened. Then they all drank a round together, crew and pirates, to disarm suspicion; but the word was passed and never a man of the snow’s crew touched liquor after that, though making a pretence of it, and each man’s mouth watering for the real thing.

The wind was light, but the pirate captain was eager for a harbour before nightfall; and so, about seven of the evening, he ordered the fleet to stand in, following the snow *Prudence Taylor*, with Captain Jonathan at her helm. There followed in order, the big *Whidah*, which Bellamy had captured in the East Indies, and two other smaller vessels. There was a lantern hung in the shrouds of the snow, that the fleet could follow, as it was shutting down dark.

Now it was bad for Bellamy that he had kept his crew on short grog allowance; for when they had free hand aboard their prize, and good liquor without stint, they soon went the way Captain Jonathan had planned, and lay about the decks and cabin as drunk as fiddlers in a tavern.

Captain Jonathan had told no lie when he said he knew the harbours, and the coast too; for he was a Cape Cod skipper, and knew the waters and what lay hidden beneath them, as a man may know Scripture by daily reading, provided he do not merely mouth the words with the hatch of the brain fastened, like some I know.

In he came, toward the shore, about a mile below the town of Eastham, and shaved two sand-bars, so close that a feather dropped on deck would have made the vessel touch, and slid alongshore till he barely tickled the end of a shoal, well in. But by this time there was fury on board the *Whidah* and one of the other craft, for they had lunged clean on to the sand-bars, so that no human power would ever get them loose.

Bellamy called for a boat, to go in search of the snow;

but Captain Jonathan had had the lantern taken down, and the prize was lost in the darkness.

When Captain Jonathan heard the outcries aboard the *Whidah*, he lowered his whale-boat, got most of the stupid pirate crew into it and had them rowed ashore, where the men of Eastham took them prisoners. Then the crew of the *Prudence Taylor* kedged her off, for she was not hard ashore, and Captain Jonathan and his vessel went on their way.

Before three o'clock next morning, the bells in the town were ringing, and men ran through the streets crying out that the big pirate ship and one other were ashore off the highlands. Then, while some made hurried preparations to put the town in measure of defence, many of us that were fast of foot set out in the early morning to journey over to the cliffs, to see what had befallen the pirate ships, and to give the alarm if the crews came ashore.

I had been some time in this part of the cape, but never had I travelled over to this forsaken shore, where the sand-hillocks rose up for seventy feet above the sea, in an incline so steep — though changing and wearing away from year to year — that in the days of which I write it was as much as a man's life was worth to try to descend or scale them, for fear of the whole bank making an avalanche and sweeping him down into the sea, across the stretch of sand floor at the base.

So when we had come to the edge of these cliffs and looked forth upon the sea, with the sun coming up over the expanse of waters, I forgot for one brief moment the

pirate ships I had come to look at, with the sight of so much forlorn grandeur.

Truth, I have been a sailor on the sea, off and on, for much of my life; but never had I then, nor have I since, had borne in upon me the feeling of the vastness of it, nor of the strength that lies hidden beneath its broad bosom, as came full upon me when I gazed from these huge walls of sand far out into the ocean. Here it seemed the vessels of the world might sail by thousands, and room for each to run its course, like the stars in the sky, without danger of crashing one into the other.

Never had I seen such a sight as the bare wastes of sand lying at the base of these cliffs of Eastham. For miles, as far as one could see, they stretched away, hard and bare, and as clean as though swept for the pathway of a bride.

Gray and brown they looked, with a slightly rounded surface, nearly level, just curving over very gently to meet the white rim of the blue water.

Back along the sand-cliffs, the colour grew more tawny, with patches deeply and brightly coloured. And beyond, as far as one could see, only the mysterious ocean; the solemn, cunning, treacherous wilderness of blue water, out to the sweep of the horizon line, and a thousand and more miles beyond.

Along this shore was no rock nor reef to batter great ships to pieces upon. Here was a far more refining process of destruction, the ceaseless grinding of the tiny particles of sand, churning and scouring and wearing away, night and day and for ever, with the working of the waters.

Here lay every object smooth and clean, polished and scoured by sand and sea. Logs, cast ashore, stripped of their bark and rubbed as smooth as glass; spars from ships, shining as they used in the days when men were clinging to them for dear life, calling out among the rigging under the stars, and whose bones the sea had long ago whitened and polished like these bits of the ship they loved; trunks of young spruce-trees, with gaunt, white arms, lay here like skeletons — all, all whitened and scoured and glazed, and helpless in the grip of the sand.

All this I saw, and more, as we came to the brow of the cliffs, and then my eyes rested on the pirate ships. There were two aground, and none other to be seen, unless a vessel some two miles out was one of them, and had taken fright at the sight of the trap the other two were in, and had made haste to get well clear.

To me, though they were pirate ships, and a scourge to be well rid of, the sight was, indeed, mournful. And, strange to say, my pity was for the great vessel, itself, that lay nearer, the huge *Whidah*, rather than for the men aboard.

A giant in the hands of a thousand pygmies might have attempted to struggle and free himself, as did this six-hundred-ton ship from the millions of tiny particles of sand that clutched its keel. There was still a ponderous sort of heaving in the huge bulk, like an elephant swaying in its chains; and, indeed, the pirate captain had still, it seemed, some hope of saving his vessel, and would not desert her and come ashore.

Yet not a boy of ten in the town but who could have

told him better; that what the cunning sand-trap closed on here only entangled itself more helplessly by its struggling; only worked its way more deeply into the clinging sand; only made itself more surely the prey of sea and shore.

Now six score men swarmed about the decks and in the rigging of the great *Whidah*; and there was Bellamy, himself, trumpeting orders like a madman, so he could be heard by us on shore a quarter of a mile away.

We saw six ship's boats, filled with men, row seaward, with anchors aboard and hawsers paying out; and then, when the flukes were biting hard into the sand, came the groaning of the windlasses and the sound of many voices. But, who shall rob the gray sands here of their prey? Not even though he be as great a robber as the pirate Bellamy.

Suddenly we saw him turn and face the cliffs where a score of us, men and boys, stood watching.

“Come out in your boats and help us get clear,” he cried through his trumpet. “You shall take your boats back full of money, an I save my ship from this cursed place.”

The men of Eastham made no answer, but set to conversing together as to whether it were good or not to accept the pirate's offer. Some said it was the wrath of God that had been visited upon the pirate, and that it were blasphemous to work to thwart it. Others argued that it might save the town from the vengeance of the pirates, should we do our best to help them, though the vessel should not be cleared.

There was one among us, also, old Uncle Ben Winterbottom, who would come hobbling along, though his wooden leg stuck deep into the sand all the way, and his trail for three miles was like that of a man planting corn with a stick.

“No good! No good!” he croaked. “It be the day for the big storm that for seven days now I’ve said was to come. Seven gulls calling it over the chimney, one for each day, and why should they fly ashore save for warning, when ’tis not their nature? Seven days gone by and the morning blood red, and the sea lathering like a dog that be furious with madness. No, no, men. Wait and see what the judgment of the Lord shall be on this wicked ship that He has driven ashore with His own breath.”

Now when Uncle Ben spoke of his prophecy, which had been a butt amongst us for a week past, we began to laugh; but, when he spoke of the judgment of the Lord, there were many that thought it might be so, and that the pirate had been delivered here, through days and days of sailing, to meet the end foreordained; and the laughter ended.

Moreover, as Cousin Ephraim pointed out, there was, indeed, a peculiar colour to the ocean; not blue nor green, nor even gray nor purple; but of a coppery blue, blended with a blackish slate hue, and other flickering, uncertain shades, and shimmering like heated metal. And there were long gray and metallic lines that seemed almost to creep and crawl over its surface.

Then, all at once, and not coming from any quarter to be seen at a distance, but as though it had dropped down

from the higher air currents that they do say are ever moving swiftly, a wind leaped lightly upon us; and the sea sprang up and danced merrily at its touch, as though it played a tune.

The ripples broke about the pirate ship, and little waves tumbled like frolicsome puppies about the feet and legs of a master, jumping up and falling back again and rolling over one another.

“ See! ” cried Uncle Ben Winterbottom. “ Do you mark it beginning? Did you see how the wind came? Where was it a moment ago, but in the hollow of the Lord’s hand? ” He raised his cap and stretched his hands reverently. Nor was there one of us to jeer at him now, for the strangeness of the thing was upon us all.

“ Bring in your boats! Bring in your boats! ” crooned Uncle Ben softly, seating himself on the edge of the bank and staying himself with his peg-leg thrust hard into the sand. “ ’Twill be soon too late; for the Lord, though slow to anger, is fearful in His wrath; and in His hand are the whirlwind and the storm.”

Perhaps — I know not — somewhat of this fear lay cold upon the heart of the pirate captain; for we saw him rush to and fro about the deck, crying his commands, and the men in the boats and at the windlass toiling desperately.

Once again did Captain Bellamy turn his trumpet toward the cliffs and vent his rage upon us.

“ Come out, men! ” he cried. “ Come out in your boats before it be too late. Or, by the torments of hell, I’ll burn your town, if I must needs leave this fine ship

for the sands of your cursed cape to swallow. Fools! Cowards! Get out your boats and lend us aid."

But the wind came harder now, and, if he spake longer, it tumbled his words into confusion, for we heard him no more.

Nor did any man or boy of us move; for we knew that the prophecy of Uncle Ben was come true.

It had grown rough about the boats by this time, and, in an hour, there was little use of their struggling and in the planting of anchors, for the boats could scarce make headway into the seas; and all the while the waves were pushing the ships harder and harder in upon the sands.

Captain Samuel Bellamy must have seen the uselessness of it, too, for he ordered the boats in again, and around they came to the lee of the ship, to where the waves had not begun to break over much. At this we scrambled up and waited anxiously, lest he should see that he was beaten and come ashore. But it seemed, while we were making ready to flee, that he, being loth to abandon his rich vessel, decided to hold on an hour longer and see what the wind would do, not knowing, as did Uncle Ben Winterbottom, that a judgment was upon him.

Morning was well along, but the day had grown dark, with clouds so tossed about by winds that the sea seemed like a reflection of the disturbance above; and the turmoil of sea and sky was blended into one. For suddenly a wind came screaming in from sea, even as they say the tide races in, in that strange bay far to the north of us on the coast of the Canadas. This was the first act of the storm in the stripping of the great *Whidah*; for the teeth

of the gale fastened in the folds of a bellying topsail, that had been left half-furled, in the flurry of the pirate crew, and, tearing it from the yard, bore it in like a fluttering sea-bird upon the beach.

Up roused the pirate captain at this, and quickly we saw the rigging of the ship black with agile men. But the storm was in the sails, and the fingers of the wind clutched and tore them from the grasp of frightened sailors.

Even as they worked, too late to get sail off the ship, a wave bigger than all, and yet a mere ripple compared with those soon to follow, enfolded the great craft in its bosom, tore it for a moment from the grasp of the sand, and then dropped it heavily upon its beam ends; so that the timbers in all its ponderous hull groaned and cracked, and the iron bolts that had been sledge-hammered into the solid oak tore out as though from paper.

The giant masts whipped through the air and brought up with a snap, as the heeling of the vessel ceased; and a dozen men dropped into the sea. A boat put out for them, and we thought they were all taken in; but suddenly the boat went over and rolled bottom up, and we never saw the men again alive.

So another boat did put out, with a score of men crowding it deep in the water. It smashed upon a bar three rods from shore, and the sea swallowed boat and men.

Never have I seen wind and water roused into fury with such quickness. Never have I seen escape cut off from men eager for life as I then saw before my eyes. For all about the ship rose up waves frothing from the sea, like an army suddenly called from ambush; and there

was no longer pathway left for flight to shore to any living thing.

The day wore on, and with the change of the tide in mid-afternoon the storm grew fiercer. Night seemed to be shutting down when it was only four o'clock. But it was not until five, or perhaps an hour later, that we saw the great spectacle of destruction that marked the end of the *Whidah*.

The sea had swollen enormously, and the waves burst like bombs against the huge hulk of the ship, crashing into a thousand flying fragments of gleaming water and foam, or breaking over the decks like rivers in flood. High up into the rigging, where a hundred men now clung, stretching out despairing hands to the shore — high into the rigging leaped the seas, shouting like savages.

Higher and higher they climbed, men and seas, till the lofty yards of the ship were black with men. Higher leaped the wild seas, eager to seize their prey and drag it down.

All at once, just as night shut in, we saw a gigantic wave curl up before the ship, and rear its wall of white and green water up and up, even to the yards. Then it dropped down in a huge mass, burying the deck and all the hull in tons of water. We could not tell just what followed, but the weight must have burst the decks in and forced the sides of the ship out; for the whole mighty fabric of oak seemed to crumble and collapse. The ship, wrenching mightily by stem and stern, pulled clean apart in the middle, so that the fore part, with the foremast, and the after part, with the main and mizzen masts, went in opposite ways.

The next moment down toppled the masts, one by one, like trees cut in the forest, crashing into the sea with every soul aboard.

Now I often think of this fearful moment as the strangest in all my life; for it seemed to me as I gazed, though white and trembling with the horror of it, as though it were still not real, but like a thing read of, or a spectacle fashioned to imitate the terrors of death at sea. For, what with the awful turmoil of the waves, and the screaming of the winds, and the din and dirl of waters where sea and shore met, there came to our ears no other sounds than these. And so the shrieks of near a hundred and two score men going swiftly down to their doom were lost in the gale; and it was to us as though the great tragedy were done in silence; that is, without the sound of a human voice to give it reality. And altogether was there such a prodigious combination of sound and fury that it was like a great unnatural silence.

Silently, it seemed, the tall masts wrenched loose from the riven oak. Silently the long yards swayed and swerved. Silently, it seemed, the men aloft clung to the loosening rigging. Without a sound that we could hear above the storm, the strong ship fell asunder and, with a mighty, exultant shouting, the wild seas swept over and buried all.

CHAPTER VII

THE WANTON SEA

WHY the big *Whidah* should have gone to pieces before the other pirate craft, I have no way of reasoning, unless it be that, with her lofty masts and heavy spars, she wrenched harder. But so it happened, and the smaller vessel held on for nearly an hour before it began to break up.

But it was all the same to the men on her. They must have been washed overboard, or drowned below decks, at least by the time the larger ship went to pieces, for nothing could live in such a sea — at least, so we thought then, but were happily disappointed in one respect, as you shall learn.

The night shutting down, we could see but little of the wreckage offshore; but, as the sea came high up on the cliffs, we could not force ourselves to go away from the place, so great was the fascination of the storm. The flying sand stung our faces like swarms of buzzing insects, and the water drenched and blinded us; but we lay flat near the edge of the cliffs and peered over at the scene of destruction.

A thousand sea-fights in one might not equal the thundering of that storm. In there rode a thousand breakers at once, all along the line, galloping like troopers; struck

each its sledge-hammer blow, then sank down, for the next, coming hard on its heels, to leap over.

Up the sand-cliffs ran the waves as they broke, like troops of infantry scaling the slippery, steep ramparts. Up the gray and yellow incline glided each one, pushed on and on by those behind; climbing, creeping, leaping, surging, only to fall back into the froth and tumult at the bottom.

I have said that nothing could live in that sea,—and you might well believe it,—and yet, there were two that did. The manner of one's coming ashore I will tell you, since my own hand aided him; and I never stretched out a hand to better man than to loyal Tom Appleton. But how the other was saved from the sea, neither I nor any one else can say. He was an Indian, of a tribe like the Indians of Nantoecket; and he suddenly appeared on the brow of the cliffs, having been tossed ashore alive, and somehow having the strength left in him to crawl out of the reach of the waves.

The *Whidah* had gone to pieces almost half an hour when I saw a great spar, or yard, of the vessel borne in toward the cliff where I lay; and I thought I saw one man clinging, or lashed, to it. Then soon I perceived there was yet life in him, despite the beating of the waves, for he gave out a faint halloo, which I answered as loud as I could.

Just as the sea hurled the long yard in against the sand-cliff, a miraculous thing happened; for a clump of wreckage struck the stick and slewed it about so that it came in endwise, and one end of it rammed into the bank, as a

man would drive a stake. It hung there for a moment, and I saw the man struggle and free himself and clutch at the sand, digging in his heels to hold on. But he seemed to lose his balance and topple back.

Then of a sudden I did a thing begotten of quick impulse; and, though I got great praise for it for a long time after, I did no more than the arrow that is shot from a bow. I slipped over the edge of the steep, treacherous bank, grinding my feet hard into the surface of the incline, so as not to slide into the sea, and seized the man by an arm. He clutched me, too, as only a man almost despairing of life, but with hope yet tingling his nerves, can do.

It was the act of providence that at that very instant the sailor partly recovered himself; for he was a man grown, and heavier than I, and had he fallen he must have dragged me with him. Though half-drowned, he was still the stronger of us two, and he gathered his remaining strength for one last effort and struggled desperately up the bank, never letting go my arm. Then, as we reached the edge of the cliff, a wave dashed over us, hurled us up over and sent us sprawling on the sands, with the breath knocked out of us, but we not much hurt.

And now I cannot help but fall to marvelling once more at the strange workings of this divine providence. For here was a man suddenly come out of the wild sea, without whom, as I have often told you, I should never have seen her who is a million times dearer to me than life itself.

When I say it was through this man whom — God ordaining — I rescued, that I met Mary Vane, I mean it was he who planned to build the vessel that carried us to

the mysterious island I shall tell you of; and, indeed, it was he who had the skill and craft to design and build the boat. But of that later. At present, he was a man saved from the wrath of the sea; but, to our minds, now that he was on land, one of a bloody band of pirates; and so he was taken back to the town a prisoner.

The sea delivered up no more live men to our mercy; nor, as yet, would it release the dead from its grasp. So, when we had waited an hour or two longer, being, ourselves, nearly dead with the cold and from battling against the wind, and with the horror of what we had seen, we went back to town.

Next day, when the morning had come and the fury of the storm had abated, and, likewise, the tide fallen, we journeyed once more to the sand-cliffs and looked down along the shore.

Never had such a sight as met our eyes been seen along the whole New England coast. Nor has the telling of it ceased to this day, though few there be now to describe it who actually looked upon it that morning.

The long, hard, glistening floor of sand lay flooded with sunlight; and there, stretched out, as though on an enormous slab, each so you would think his own mother might come to claim her son, lay row upon row of dead men. Seventy and eight we counted then, and through the day the sea tumbled in twenty more. Eight and ninety in all that day, laid out on the great, gray sand-bier.

Beyond them, not two score feet away, was the mangled body of the great ship, torn in half; the pirate ship that had preyed along our shores.

There was no life in any body, nor, indeed, what with the wanton play of the sea, much semblance in most of them to the men they had been.

Now we were all at our wits' end, as to what we should do; for here was a great, barren graveyard without a grave dug in it, and eight and ninety bodies craving burial. We set off again for town, and came back in a little while with shovels and spades and hoes, and even rakes, and whatsoever we could find to dig with. Then we set about to bury these men out of the way of the sea.

But it was sorry work and terribly hard to do; for if you have ever dug in the sand you know that it has a malicious and a tricky way of tormenting one. It seemed that for every spadeful we threw aside there slipped cunningly back, to take its place, at least two others; and so to dig one grave, or a trench that would answer for one, there was at the least the labour for two.

There was no way of taking the bodies up the cliffs, for it was as much as a live man could do to make the ascent, without giving a hand to a dead man, and we had no tackle with which to draw them up. So we must needs bury those that we could, at the foot of the cliffs, out of the reach, as we thought, of all but the very highest winter seas.

We took no clothing from any pirate body, though some of them were richly dressed; but the money in their pockets, and in the belts about their waists, we deemed as though no more their property than ours, since they had taken it by force, and we had now to bury them. However, of the specie, there was not twenty pounds worth of it all, there being but a few English gold pieces, and mostly

Spanish pieces of eight, and a few coppers of the stamp of William and Mary.

In all, with a gold watch-case apiece, and a few dollars in money, there was not enough to pay us for our frightful labour; and, indeed, we did it because, after all, they were men of the same clay as we, and we could not endure to see them lie there for the sun and the sea-birds to shame.

All day long we toiled, men and boys, some two score of us — and even women and girls, though we begged them keep away from the dreadful task.

When it had come noon, we must cease for weariness, and to eat what victuals had been brought over to us from the town; but we had little appetite for the food, though we withdrew from the horrid sight some rods down along the shore, and built a fire to sit and smoke our pipes by.

Then we fell to again, the men of us, for the women had had enough of the work. Yet, for our all day's labour, and toil as hard as we could, there were thirty bodies to bury when the sun had gone down; and not a man nor boy of us with strength left to lift a shovel full of sand.

We left them there upon the shore, and tramped wearily back to town, intending to return on the morrow; but there was a fascination that drew us back again that very night, when we had had our suppers and the refreshment of good tobacco.

It seemed, as I learned afterwards, that this was the time of a fierce inrush of waters all along the coast, and a vaster quantity of water rolled up in the tides than in years, which accounted for what we saw. For, as the

moon rose and the tide swelled, and a white light lay over all the dark bosom of the sea, we saw its wrath again visited upon those that had used it to do their evil deeds upon. Even on the dead that we had put decently away beneath the sand, did the cruel sea seek vengeance; and the desecration by the waters was a fearful thing to behold.

From what cause I know not, since the wind had steadily lessened and there was no more wrath and fury in it, but merely a gentle sort of murmuring and whispering, as though it pleaded now with the sea to relent,—from what cause I know not,—with the flooding of the tide, the surface of the sea swelled again and heaved up into huge rollers. They did not hurl themselves against the shore nor crash against the sand-cliffs, as in the preceding night's storm, but rather lunged in a series of mighty sweeps and rolls and rushes. The fierce palpitation of the great heart of the ocean was indeed ended; but now there succeeded a deep, strong pulsation that was awesome and a marvellous thing to see.

First, the waves clutched at the things that lay stark and senseless upon the sand, and drew them back, silently and swiftly, into the froth.

Up came each wave, writhing out of the depths of the black ocean pool like the great sea-serpent that mariners tell of. Swiftly it darted out upon the beach, paused for one brief moment, frothing white along the rim of the shore, and then slid back into the darkness. Silently, save for a low hissing as it moved along the sands, each curling wave seized dead men and dragged them down. Then back they came; and often, in cruel play, they threw the bodies

out upon the shore again, only to snatch them up once more as the tide rose.

Stealthily the ghoulish sea rolled in to commit the sin abhorred of men. Silently the desecration of the sand-graves began. And a bitter thing it was to weary men to watch the waters make sport of death and of decent burial.

The ocean rose mightily — ten feet more at high tide than it had ever risen before — and still nursing in its bosom the surging wrath of the storm, only no longer bellowing out its rage. Up the sand-cliffs the seas swept, and, as they fell back, they slid their fingers deep into the sand that we had thrown up. Now these sailors that we had put away for their last sleep under the cliffs, in their shallow beds, came tumbling out of them.

Up and down the sand-cliffs through half the long night did the sea roll the five score and more pirate bodies; tossed them up the steep incline, let them roll back again and caught them in its arms.

When we could no longer endure the horror of it, we turned homeward and got back to the town about midnight.

Next day, we had the man I had helped to rescue out from the town gaol to be taken before the magistrate, Cornelius Parton; and there was much speculation as to what must be done with him, he being a bloody pirate, it seemed, but one that had been saved as by a miracle of the Lord. But, it came about very happily to a solution; for it turned out that he was no pirate at all, but one Tom Appleton, who had been not long in the colonies, but had recently come over from Nottinghamshire, England.

And this rejoiced my cousin much, for he was, himself, by ancestry, of the blood of that part of the old country.

It seems that this Tom Appleton had gone out from the colonies on a cruise to Madeira, and the ship had been taken by pirates, sacked and sunk, after the crew, save Tom Appleton and two more able seamen, had been impressed.

Moreover, from the story of Tom Appleton, this Captain Bellamy was the most heartless scoundrel that I ever heard of. There were aboard the *Whidah* some eight or ten men whom he had taken from vessels along the Cape Cod coast; and when he found himself undone and the waters rising to engulf his ship, his fury against these Cape Cod men knew no bounds.

So he turned suddenly from the idea of saving his ship and his own life, and wreaked a fearful vengeance on these men, even though he knew they were all doomed to die as well as he. He called one John Peterson, mate, and ordered that these Cape Cod men, and Tom Appleton with them, be brought aft and butchered and cast into the sea before his eyes. And so they were all stabbed and thrown into the sea, save Tom Appleton, who broke away and climbed aloft and fought and killed two pirates with his sheath-knife in the rigging, and was saved from pistoling by the ship's heeling over and the masts going into the sea, with him and the pirates.

Now, when we had heard Tom Appleton's story, we knew it was true from the straightforward manner of his telling of it; and, moreover, his becoming modesty in the

mention of his killing the pirates aloft was a matter that was commended.

But there proved to be other verification of his story, for there came forward a man of Eastham whose family was all from Nottinghamshire; and he asked after this one and that one, most of whom Tom Appleton told of readily. Indeed, the Eastham man knew Tom Appleton's own uncle; and so the whole town welcomed him and urged him to abide with them.

Of the great tides that mocked at our concern for the dead and robbed them of our poor burial there were three, two following the one of which I have told you. So that for two days there was no rest for the six score and odd dead of the pirate crew, in that they were alternately cast up by the sea and drawn back into it again; and lay by turns in whatsoever shifting grave the sea dug for them amid the sand and weed, or remained, an awesome sight along the shore, like drift from far off woods.

Some few, indeed, we contrived on the second day to draw up over the cliffs with tackle, and bury, high out of the harm of the waters; but when we had come upon one of the Cape Cod men that bore the marks of the pirate's violence, our gorge rose at the whole cursed crew; and we gave over trying to put away any more of them from sight, at least, for that day.

When the tides had shrunk to their usual volume, however, it being the fourth day subsequent to the storm, we did bury more of them again on the shore, and would have worked to the end, but that the task became too irksome and we were forced to abandon the place.

And I remember to this day how, when we sailed by that shore, weeks after, the sea-birds rose in clouds at our shouting, and the fishermen shook their heads grimly as they gazed in at the place of wrath.

CHAPTER VIII

A VESSEL UNDER A CURSE

THIS man, Tom Appleton of Nottinghamshire, was a most genial fellow, and a handy one and resourceful; for, though he was but ten years older than I, having thirty notches cut in his staff of life to my twenty, he had been on his feet, as we say, almost ever since he could walk.

At ten he had been apprenticed at a ropewalk, and knew, from that, much of ropes and the making of them. Then, at fifteen, had he quit that and gone into a shipyard and remained there till he was of age. Indeed, he knew more about the insides of a ship than any man I ever met with, having so intimate a knowledge of its articulation and the body outside its bones that he could diagnose the illness of a vessel like a physician; and he might tell from the rumbling and groaning in its great vitals what part of it had suffered in a storm.

He was just a trifle below medium height, thick-set, and immensely strong in the body and forearms, as sailors often are, and his voice was deep sounding as a horn of brass. Withal, I never loved a man more in all the world than Tom Appleton — unless it were Will Endicott. And as for him, I loved no man more than Will Endicott, unless it were Tom Appleton.

Moreover, Tom Appleton had the gift, that a few men have, of doing what he willed, in such a way that no man could take it ungraciously. So that, if he chose to stay with you for a week or a year, he did it, and you were glad of it, and made him welcome; or rather, he welcomed himself and you caught the spirit of it from him.

When we had quieted down from the stir and excitement of the wrecking of the pirate ships, and had gone to fishing again, Tom Appleton joined with us; and it seemed as natural to have him as though he had been born and brought up among us. And he was grateful in all his acts, rather than by speech, for what we had done for him, and was to me like an elder brother. There were a hundred things he could show me, that a man should know to get his living upon the sea, by means of boats; and he had a dozen contrivances for doing a thing where I could see but one.

In a measure, he was disputatious, putting his own construction upon things and making his own interpretations, rather than seeking the precedents of other men. In this he did puzzle Ephraim sorely, since he would argue points of Calvinism, such as the damnation of infants, and the like, instead of taking the postulate of Cotton Mather. And this to Cousins Mercy and Ephraim was like unto rubbing cats from their tails up to their ears; and they would have stood it from no other man than Tom Appleton.

Most of all, was he skeptical of witches and witchcraft, and I am almost persuaded by him, myself, that there are not any such, and perhaps never were. It was

by reason of this that he least liked Cotton Mather. For he argued that because the Bible had spoken of witches, it did not follow that they existed to-day.

So, when Tom Appleton talked and argued, I was of a mind that witchcraft was a delusion and a foolishness; but when I got the proof positive of witchery from the mouth of one who had known of it, then was I uneasy in mind and had rather not cross a witch. Ephraim knew there were witches, for he had once had a spell put on him, being obsessed and thrown into a grievous sickness, with fever, by a woman whose son he had caused to be fined for working on the Sabbath. But Tom Appleton thought this might have been a damming up of the liver from the eating of pork pie and goose livers and fried bacon, with syrup and sweet cakes, and drinking heavy ale, about New Year's time; for that was the season.

In all I confess, I am not certain in the matter of witches, and wish, for the better equilibrium of my mind, that the thing could be settled surely one way or the other before I die. However, I am not afraid of them—though I say this in no spirit of challenge, should any be near by.

In the latter part of May of this year, Tom Appleton first broached to me the subject of building a boat; that is, that he and I and Elbridge and Elias should do it together and own her equally in shares. And, in case we should decide to do this, Tom Appleton would send on by ship to New York for a small sum of money, some eighty odd pounds that he had there with a banker, and would settle amongst us.

Tom Appleton's plan was, that we should build a boat of about twenty-five tons, fore and aft rigged, with a square foretopsail, and with a well in her hold for bringing fish alive into the Boston market, besides accommodations for splitting and salting others. Moreover, by cutting much of our timber, and doing our own work, under Tom Appleton's guidance, the whole boat would not put us out of pocket in hard money more than a hundred pounds.

Well, we talked the matter over very seriously, for twenty-five pounds of clear cash was not eating its way out of the money-bag of any one of us. But the project looked good from the start, for we saw the fairer side of it always, and that was, a measure of independence and a real beginning of our fortunes. Cousin Ephraim took that same view of it, having an honest desire for me to get on in life, and offered to advance me the twenty-five pounds outright, with my gold watch and chain for security; and, indeed, there was no risk for him in that, they being worth much more money, together. But I needed only fifteen pounds from him, having the rest put by from my earnings.

Elias's father, too, was ready with the money for his share, when he had sifted the scheme and passed his judgment on it, and Tom Appleton having laid it before him plausibly.

But as for poor Elbridge, he was eager for the venture, yet had little to offer for it; and, in the end, he could raise only ten pounds. However, Tom Appleton put up the balance for him, and was to be paid in due time out of Elbridge's share of the profits of our fishing.

When we had got the matter thus far under way, and Tom Appleton had made us a model and drawn plans and done much calculating, we went down to the south part of the town, to a shipyard close by what was then Flownder Lane. We got the use of a corner of this for a trifling sum beyond what we should pay to the shipwright for materials bought of him.

Then at length, one day, we went to work and laid down our cross-pieces for the keel to rest on; and then, with some slight formality, laid the keel itself. This was of great, tough pieces of elm, hewn down by Tom Appleton, with Elbridge, who could use the broadaxe and adze a little, to help him. This laying of the keel was witnessed, I recall, by Squire Andrews and his wife, and Cousins Ephraim and Mercy, and by a Mr. Brewster, a neighbour, Elbridge Carver's father, and one or two others.

We worked hard then for many days, making our craft as comely and graceful as possible, following Tom Appleton's model. When we had got the oaken stem and stern-posts up, and the ribs fastened in and the keelson laid on over the floor-timbers, and all bolted through and through, likewise some hemlock knees put in to strengthen and stiffen the hull, our boat began to assume a definite form; and we could hardly work, from desire to stand and gaze at her.

We had her well up in the stocks, and were pleased enough at our progress, when a thing happened that put some damper on our spirits. For, suddenly, there appeared one day at the shipyard none other than the great Cotton

Mather, striding up aggressively, his face clouding, and demanding to know if a rascal named Tom Appleton be building a vessel there. So Tom, taken much aback and foreseeing squalls coming, got down most decently from his work, and took off his cap and replied, with deference, that he was Tom Appleton; but that he had never been called rascal before, having done no dishonesty to any man so far back as he could remember.

For all that, the great Cotton Mather was not to be appeased by Tom's civility; but he drew back, and lifted up his right hand solemnly and pierced Tom Appleton through and through with his strong eyes. Then he poured out a denunciation upon him such as I had never heard before against Tom Appleton or any other man. Nor could Tom Appleton say aught in his own defence; for, as often as he tried, then was he swept off his feet by the flood of objurgation and words of wrathful warning. In short, as he said afterwards, he was never so be-smothered and suffocated with words in all his life.

There never was a greater infidel nor scoffer brought into the colonies, cried Cotton Mather, than this Tom Appleton; which was outside of the truth, since Tom Appleton was, to my knowledge, a good Christian man, and thankful to God for saving him from the pirates and the sea. But word of Tom's discussions as to witchcraft (which I do think the great preacher had now, himself, some uneasiness in mind over), and of his questioning of certain points of orthodoxy, that were as bedrock and granite corner-stones to Cotton Mather, had come to the preacher's ears. And he was a man irritable

and harsh at times, and fiercely so toward those who dared to disagree with him and what he taught.

Evil should befall this rogue, cried Cotton Mather; and evil should befall those that dared to keep his company, or harbour him, or have aught to do with him. As for the labours of his hands, a judgment of fire and brimstone would be rained down upon them, and an horrible tempest would shatter his works as though they had never been.. And he warned us three, as we feared the blight that would come upon all abominations, to forswear his company for ever, and let him go his way to destruction, nor be dragged down with him.

When he had departed, as abruptly as he appeared, we put away our tools for the remainder of the afternoon. He had, indeed, thrown us into a sorry confusion, seeming to have uttered, as a prophecy, that the vessel we were building should be smitten by tempest and scourged from the sea; so that it took the heart out of us for the time being.

It put a check upon our work for the best part of a week; and, if the building of the boat had not gone on so far, it might have been abandoned altogether; for Cotton Mather had great hold upon Cousin Ephraim and Squire Andrews and Elbridge's father. But it seemed, fortunately, that Squire Andrews's heart was set on having the venture go through.

So Squire Andrews and Ephraim went to see Cotton Mather, and got — what Tom Appleton could not — a hearing from him, they being sound men in the church and zealous supporters of it and of Cotton Mather. The

outcome was, we might go on with the work, since it was a good business venture, but for us to have as little as possible to do with Tom Appleton. Above all, to listen to no theological argument of his, and to bring him to the front of the church Sundays, where Cotton Mather might have him in mind when he prayed for the wicked.

As for our share in the venture, Cotton Mather would say naught against it; but as for Tom Appleton's, it would come to no good, but would meet with the punishment of evil. So we were even then puzzled, and argued over it often, as to what might befall a boat one-fourth of which, or a little more, was the product of evil and would be visited with wrath.

We went to work once more, then, upon our boat, and did our best to follow the injunctions of Cotton Mather; for we asked Tom Appleton no more about our work than was necessary for us in order to do it right,—which was every other minute,—and we refrained from breaking in upon his discourses with arguments, because none of us was wont to argue with him anyway, knowing we should be bested if we did.

As for theological disputation, there was none of us inclined to it, save Tom Appleton; so he had no one to contend with. Then, we kept no more of his company than was requisite to perform our daily labours with him, from six in the morning until six at night, and a few pipefuls of tobacco together after supper, until it was time to go to bed.

So we got along very well, and Tom Appleton had never to pay the fine for being absent from church. More-

over, he had come out of the affair easily, for he could have been made to stand in the market-place on Lecture Day, with a paper pinned to his breast, and the words, "A wanton Gospeller," thereon.

We got the planking all on about the latter part of July, having had a few days' assistance from a skilled man in the shipyard, and began caulking up the seams with oakum saturated with tar and pitch. By and by, when the tar was well baked and did no longer dent with the jab of a stick, we covered the whole body of the boat with three good coats of paint.

Then we made an excursion of it for a few days out of Boston harbour, down among the islands, and cut two great spruce-trees that should serve respectively as fore and main mast, some handsome sticks for topmasts and yards, and some pieces for booms and gaffs and bowsprit.

When we had got these worked down properly, and had them smooth and oiled, they were quite elegant, glistening like the sticks of a man-o'-war's man; and the day we stepped them in our boat, setting them solidly into the keelson and wedging them so they stood as though rooted, was a great day in our lives.

In the meantime, having got his dimensions, Tom Appleton had been busy evenings cutting and making the sails, we all taking hold, on work that he would allow us to touch. So by the time the standing rigging had been set up and our boat was in shape for launching, the sails were ready to be stretched on her, or would be by the time she was slid into the water.

It was a day near the end of August that we appointed for the launching, our boat being finished and to be put overboard with masts stepped. She was to be christened on that day the *Venture*, there being no young woman, then, that any of us would have her named after; since, as for Elbridge and me, we had not been smitten as yet and had had no time nor money for idle flirtations; and as for Tom Appleton, he may or may not have had a sweetheart, or even a wife, in the old country, but spoke never of either. And as for Elias, he had no name to offer, nor did we ask him the question directly. But Cousin Ephraim suggested we call the boat the *Venture*, and was pleased to have us accept his suggestion.

When the day arrived, we had some strips of bunting brought over and made the corner of the shipyard very gay with them; and some of the bunting, and a fine flag lent us by Elias's father, fluttered in the rigging and made a gallant show. Then we had one-half a water-butt set on end, and a punch brewed in it by Tom Appleton, and Cousin Mercy's glazed cups for every one to drink out of.

There were some two score and ten of us, all told — since a launching, even of a small vessel, was no light event in the town. Of these there were, first, Cousins Ephraim and Mercy and Elbridge's family; but Squire Andrews and his family could not come. Then there were, Neighbour Pettingill and two comely daughters of his, of whom one, Annie, was to christen the boat with a bottle of wine. She was, indeed, a buxom and a sweet-faced young woman, but I thought nothing of her — at least I have not remembered of it, since I met my own

Mary. Only I do recall that I invited her to do the christening, by way of neighbourly courtesy. And I need mention no more of the party, for the names would be unfamiliar.

On the hour that the tide was right, good Tom Appleton and Elias began, all at once, to knock away the shores that held the boat by the bows; and soon she began moving, ever so slowly, cradle and all, down the ways; which gave me a feeling of chokiness in the throat, to see the thing we had laboured over so long begin to take life.

Then pretty Annie swung the bottle cleverly, by the ribbon about its neck, and dashed it against the bow as the boat glided by; and so, with the foaming of the wine, it met its first wave from the hand of a woman, and rode through it proudly, on down into the water. There, by reason of Tom Appleton's cleverness, the cradle fell from it and apart, and our little vessel floated handsomely and gallantly; and we hailed it with cheering until we could shout no more.

Then, before the feasting should begin, there was a series of games and trials of strength between us men; and Tom Appleton and Elias, who had learned it aboard the man-o'-war's man, did some single stick work which was very pretty to see, and whereby Elias got a lump above his right ear that was like a pear. Then did Tom Appleton best every one, even the larger men, at a game of sitting back to back and locking arms and seeing who should flip the other over his head. For Tom Appleton, as I have said, had great strength wrapped up in a compact body.

So I had the hope and the expectation, too, of winning some honour in a wrestling-match with Elias, I having grown to equal him in height, though not as great of girth, and feeling myself to be as strong as any man. Three bouts we were to wrestle, and the better of us would be he who should get the most of them. The first time, we were at it some minutes, being both fresh and looking for each other's tricks warily. But, in the end, I found Elias had learned many things among the king's men that I had not heard of; and he threw me.

However, I felt I should do better on the second trial, knowing more what to expect of him, and having good advice from Tom Appleton; but Elias was for winning howsoever he could, and got a hold on me all at once that seemed to strangle all the breath out of my windpipe—I have since learned the hold is barred in most matches—and I could not stand it long, and so was thrown again. Nor did I feel, then, fit for a third bout, being still gasping and sore from my strangling; but it would seem like flunking not to try for one fall when the chance was open to me. So I went up again, like a lamb to the butcher, and Elias laughed as he laid me a third time on my back.

However, I made the best face of it that I could; and ate so heartily, to show I cared nothing for defeat, that I could eat no more for the next three days, from an indigestion. As for pretty Annie, I cared for her, as I say, no more than for a neighbour's daughter, to whom I should be courteous; and yet I had rather she did not see me thrown.

CHAPTER IX

DRIVEN TO SEA

So we had, at last, got our little vessel built and into the water; and that, too, without mishap. Then, having tried her out a few times about the inner harbour and across to Charlestown, and got our sails stretched and a little refitting of them done, we put in our nets and some trawls and other tackle and began to go on fishing voyages in earnest.

There was good fishing then in and about the great harbour out from our town, over some seventy odd square miles of water; and there were the five score islands to lie snug among in nasty weather, and fish in the lee of.

But in all this sailing was there need of experience, and a memory of waters seen to be shoal when they lay calm in the sunlight. For I remember of Ephraim's telling me, in the early days of my going on voyages with him, that these reefs, if a boat got in too near, had a way of stretching themselves out to grasp at the keel of it. And, indeed, that seemed to be so, particularly when the tide was setting in strong against them. So, in this part of our cruising, I was more often at the tiller than Tom Appleton or the others, for I had had the most experience there.

These September days were days of excellent profit

to us, and the *Venture* did, in truth, seem to be good in name and fact; so that we were in a fair way to pay for her, that is, the actual money we had expended, within the course of the year.

The month of October came in stormy, with the sea tossed about this way and that and greatly disturbed by the capriciousness of the winds. So, whereas we had been weather-wise to a degree that gave us a flattering opinion of ourselves, now we were uncertain how the wind would blow come to-morrow, as to what direction and strength; and, indeed, it were like to blow from many different points in a single day, and fitfully and deceitfully, with squalls springing suddenly out of hiding. This kept us constantly reefing and putting on sail again, we being one minute becalmed and the next crushing the water white under our lee rail, and wet to our knees with waves rolling aboard.

However, we were well hardened to it, and thought no more of lying down to catch an hour's sleep with our garments soaked through to the skin than though we had been at home in a bed of feathers and corn-husks.

And as for a good, hard blow and nasty weather, we were like boys with a new toy, that must try ever to see how far it will go toward the breaking point; for, when it blew hardest, we would say how stiff our boat was, and how well she stood up to it, and how fast she sailed close-reefed. So, too, when the seas pounded us heavily, we were for ever trying the pump to prove she had started nowhere, but was strongly built and dry and a credit to us.

Tom Appleton was pleased to declare often that she

could take us to England, did we choose, and was a better boat for her size than Columbus had.

Thus we did make fast trips and many of them, and worked very industriously; so that by the middle of October we had shared more than forty pounds amongst us, and had money jingling in our belts. Nor was money other than scarce in those times, save to a very few, by inheritance or hazardous trading or roguery.

It was about this time, or a little before, that we took to going up Gloucester way, and sometimes around Cape Ann, where Ephraim and I had gone before, and of which waters Ephraim had drawn out for himself and me a rough chart.

However, Ephraim advised against this now, as the season was getting far advanced, and it were safer to follow the shore southward and keep inside of the long cape named for the great store of codfish in its waters; and we made up our minds to follow Ephraim's advice shortly, but went once too often, like a man deciding to give up liquor and loth to take his last glass.

We set out one morning, about the middle of October, heading for Cape Ann. I think it was to have been our last trip for the season up that way, that is, unless we should get a big haul quickly. We laid over in Salem harbour for a night, and went out again in the morning, in a light wind that came astern from the southward.

We judged there had been a hard blow outside that night, for the waves were out of proportion to the strength of the morning wind, as though they had rolled in from a disturbance seaward.

Then, the sea gradually calming and the wind dying and the tide beginning to slacken, we foresaw we should not reach the cape before dark; nor was there a breeze to set us in to any nearer harbour. By dinner-time we were no more than standing still, there being only puffs of wind at long intervals; and the sky was dulling with a gray overcasting of clouds, though it had been clear and shining when we started, and the day unnaturally hot for the season.

Toward the middle of the afternoon, we saw we should have bad weather; for huge white and black clouds were mounting the sky to the westward over the land, distant, and we heard now and again the low rumble of thunder; but as yet no wind reached us.

Then the whole surface of the sea darkened from the shadows of the cloud-banks, and a heaviness spread over all the clouds in the sky, fading them from gray to a more sombre hue. Nor did the light show now anywhere on all the expanse of the sea, save that, away out on the horizon, a long, livid streak lay along the whole length of it.

We had seen something like this before and were in no terror of it; yet we would gladly have been running for harbour, but there was no wind to do this, it holding off to the last moment and gathering its strength. So we shortened sail, leaving but a scrap of our forestaysail and very little foresail at all, and the mainsail double reefed, to work with. Likewise we shut our hatches, and made our boat snug and tight in every way.

‘Despite all this, we were not prepared, as it turned out,

for what was in store for us, having, even then, too much sail on her. Moreover, it seemed as though the storm had a certain malice in it, and a purpose to strike terror into our hearts at the very outset; for, just before the first fierce onrush of the wind, there came a bolt of lightning darting down from the heavens, and it fell into the sea near us, so we could see the waters boil about the spot; and we felt a numbness in our limbs from it. At this very instant, the roar and crash of the thunder was in our ears.

Now we were, all four, thrown down by the shock, and lay for a moment on the deck; and at that moment the words of Cotton Mather came into my mind, that a judgment of fire and brimstone would be rained down upon us, and an horrible tempest destroy the work of our hands. Nor did I doubt but that time and that judgment had come. And so, I think, were the others of the same mind, and we were all filled with the same terror together.

However, we roused up from this, by reason of a blast of wind sweeping down upon us, and laying our little vessel over so that it was near to being the end of her then and there; but Tom Appleton having got to the tiller, and the rest of us following quickly, we got the vessel up into the wind a little and she righted, rushing through the water at a fearful rate when she had gotten headway.

Now we saw, too late, the magnitude of the storm, and would have brought the vessel up into the wind more to get all her mainsail down, since it would not drop when we tried to let it run, because of the great pressure of the wind. But before we could work her, there came another fierce squall that blackened the sea about us like night;

and at this the bolts that held the shrouds of the main-mast tore loose and flew for a moment about our heads, menacing us.

Then the mainmast, itself, with the weight and pressure of sail and the fury of the wind, bent over like a tree leaning in the forest and snapped off close by the house, and went overboard. So now we could not stand into the wind at all, not being able to work our foresail; but were driven out to sea, with the gale trumpeting like an army at our heels.

Thus the night shut down around us; and we drove on through the waves, throwing up a huge wall of green water on either side of our wake, which seemed ever rushing in on deck to engulf us. At first, we clung to the tiller, all four of us, since the boat was in constant peril of broaching and swinging around to get the sea broadside. However, finally, Tom Appleton did manage to crawl forward and get a piece of rope, so that we lashed the tiller with it between the rails, enabling us to steer more easily.

All this was bad enough, and we made a horrible night of it, scarcely able to breathe, on account of the incessant flying of the spray into our nostrils. But toward morning things took a turn for the worse, owing to an alteration of the wind.

It seemed that what had threatened to be but a shower and wind-storm, such as passes quickly, had developed into a great storm; and the wind had swung now around to the southward, with a slight veering eastward, and was carrying us north.

The sea grew infinitely rougher at this; for, whereas there were miles of great billows pouring upon us from the direction of the land, now there came up also the wild sea increasing from the southward, and the two met with a terrific bellowing, like herds of cattle.

So that here was now no law upon the wild ocean, even that of storm, for us to be guided by and to act upon; but only the madness and confusion and anarchy of the sea, amidst which we tossed and scudded helplessly.

With the coming of the day, there was no diminution, but rather an increase, of the gale, and, moreover, about this time, our rudder became almost unmanageable from some cause, either clogging with sea growth or being strained by the seas. So we could have steered toward no land had we seen any; but we must have been well to the north and at sea from Cape Ann; and, withal, it were safer to be at sea, helpless, than driving on to a lee shore, since we could not help ourselves.

There was no sun to be discerned, but there was a lightening of the sky, which was a relief, though it did but disclose the sea widely flowing and all its endless spaciousness thrown into tumult. Overhead, the dark clouds rolled like the smoke of battle. And I remember that the sea presented a sight most strange and unearthly; for the effect of the great white breakers over all its black surface was as if the whole sea were flowing rapidly and rushing onward like a mighty river.

All that day we lay near the tiller, under the lee of the stern rail and lashed thereto with ends of rope; for the seas were constantly breaking over us and there was danger

of their washing us overboard, since we were half-dead from weariness and from hunger, having eaten nothing since noon of the day before. But, toward the end of that afternoon, I loosed myself and made my way forward to the galley. I was thrown sprawling several times in attempting this, for we were pitching and driving aimlessly, and the decks all slabbery with the wash and scum of the sea. I did contrive, however, to get to the hatchway and open it and go below, though I let in a great wave in doing so, and was nearly tumbled headlong down the ladder along with it.

Down in the galley I found a sorry mess. By the breaching of the seas, the water had already made an entrance before this last wave; and food and dishes were soaking in the sea-water, and floating about together promiscuously. I got together, nevertheless, a pile of the stuff, some biscuits, soggy and falling to pieces, a few scraps of hard-bread, a piece of smoked fish, and, best of all, a cask of water that had kept almost pure, being but slightly brackish from the seepage of salt water about the bung.

We put some life back in our bodies with this stuff, though the salty food gave us a raging thirst, and we might have gone out of our wits but for the water in the cask.

Then, when the night came on again, we felt that the gale was abating slightly, for the gloomy canopy of cloud that appalled us began to break up; and now and then, as the rifts widened and stretches of the blue sky appeared, we saw, as we drove swiftly on, the countless hosts

of gleaming stars marching rapidly above our heads; and it gave us heart to look at them.

By morning, we could move about the deck a little, though the sea was running high and we had as yet no way of governing the course of our boat. However, we were in better spirits, for the sun came out and warmed us; and that, alone, was a great blessing, for we were nearly perishing with the chill of the cold water.

CHAPTER X

THE LITTLE MAID

ALL this afternoon of the third day of our great distress we did little, beyond working alternately at the pumps and attempting to tighten up our boat; for she was badly strained and beaten open about the stern, and the water coming in so that we were much logged with the amount of it in the hold. By labouring at this the greater part of the afternoon, jamming in sail-cloth and oakum wherever it were possible, we managed to get her into such condition that by working, two of us at a time throughout the night, we should all get some sleep, of which we were in sore need.

Still we could do scarcely anything toward guiding our broken vessel, the rudder being almost unmanageable.

By our compass in the cabin, which we found unharmed, we now saw we were being carried by the sea and light wind north and slightly west, which would bring us eventually, by our calculations, somewhere in upon the coast of our great province of Maine, with which none of us was familiar. I say, by our calculations we figured this, but it was nothing better than guesswork; for we estimated that we had been driven near to two hundred miles from our town of Boston, being carried very rapidly for the first twenty-four hours of the storm.

Toward evening, before the twilight fell, we made another rummaging through the cabin and the galley, for food, and got out a small bottle of brandy, a part of a flitch of bacon, and a box containing about two quarts of oatmeal. This, with a few swallows of water, made us a good meal.

Now when the morning of the fourth day was come, clear, and with the sun shining, and the sea no longer troubled, we were greatly uplifted in spirit, although our vessel was, indeed, in a sad way. For there were the bright heavens once more declaring the glory of God, and the ocean won away from its wildness by the alienation of gentle breezes and the sunlight, and all the air soft and caressing as in a summer day.

We went heartily at the pumps, then, after finishing the scraps left from our supper. We set the foresails and rigged one of the long sweeps of the vessel, by means of rope under the stern rail, to steer by. So we went along in toward the land, having the wind very light, and directly aft, to favour us. Then, toward noon, we made out, some seven miles ahead, the outlines of an island, with hills of some considerable height rising out of the sea. This was in our course, and towards it we steered.

But, now again, our fortunes darkened all in an instant; and we saw the fickleness and uncertainty of the sea, and the folly of trusting it blindly. For, as we were going along hopefully, and could see no warning in any shallowing of the water, nor heard the sound of any breakers near, we came to a sudden stop, lifting our bow up out of the water and going down by the stern, having run upon

a sunken reef — for the tide was high — and were hard and fast there.

It was so quietly done, and so easily and slowly were we sailing, that we did not strike heavily; and, had our boat not been already weakened and racked by the storm, she might have held firm and, possibly, have been worked free again; but, as it was, she had no sooner gone upon the ledge and listed a little and put her stern under, than she began to open up her seams forward and along her bilge; and, soon, the whole stern went clear to bottom on the incline of the ledge, leaving only the forward part and a little of the deck amidships above water.

So we were forced to quit the *Venture* then and there, having our small boat to embark in, and thankful that the storm had left us that. And we could get nothing but some carpenter's tools and a few pieces of spare sail out of the forecastle of the *Venture*, to stand as signs and reliques of the money and toil we had put into the vessel and the undertaking; so that this, and some little money we had left deposited at home, and about twenty pounds that Tom Appleton carried ever in his belt about him, and some two pounds more between the rest of us, was all we had in the world.

Now we rowed sadly away, grievously hurt in spirit and our eyes moistened, and the four of us, withal, tender as children; for, indeed, our griefs be the same as theirs, only the toys being larger. And it was a sorry sight to see our good boat lying deserted, for the barnacles and sea-moss to cover; and the worms to feed upon her timbers of oak; and the sails to flutter, torn and sorrowful and

rotting, in the winds; and the sea-crabs to find a habitation where we had lain snug of nights and smoked and told our stories.

Just as we drew away from our little vessel for ever, there came up a shower of rain from some passing clouds. Nor was there anything of threat or menace in this shower, nor any gale stealing up by surreption behind its soft clouds; but only a gentle falling of the rain for a half-hour, that greatly refreshed us. At the end of it, and when we had rowed in to within some two miles of the island that loomed up before us, over against the setting sun a splendid rainbow shone amid the falling drops; and we rowed on toward it, as though we sought the golden treasure that lies for ever buried at the base thereof, whether it come down on sea or land.

Moreover, we did soon discover a great treasure, indeed — though not of gold, but more precious; for we espied a tiny sail a mile ahead. Then, as we rowed, spurring ourselves on to come up with it, there came into view a little pinnace, going on very lazily toward the island. As we gained on the craft and hallooed for it to stop, it came to, all at once, and waited for us.

We saw now that the pinnace was being rowed by a swarthy, squat little man, bearded to his eyes, bushily. In the stern sat a little maid, holding the tiller and managing the sails, as though she were skilled at it, for, the wind being fickle, they had been alternately sailing and rowing.

And of all strange things I had witnessed upon the sea, that seemed to me then the strangest, to behold this little

maid here amid the waste and loneliness of it; and to us that had been so recently tempest-tossed and were wanderers on the face of the ocean, it seemed a miracle to see her there, though she were really close to harbour. And the little maid was to us like the dove that came to the ark, after the days and nights of flood, and was a vision and a promise of peace.

Then, as we came alongside, Tom Appleton called out to them that we were men shipwrecked, having left our vessel stranded away to the southward, and wished to follow them in to harbour.

At this the black man shook his head and gave an exclamation in a foreign tongue, pointing at the same time on toward the mainland, which must have been at least ten miles distant.

But the little maid, who had eyed us very sharply, turned quickly upon her companion in the boat and spoke to him; and they conversed together for a moment in what I knew to be Spanish, having heard the sailors of Cuba and Jamaica speak the same tongue about our wharves. But none of us could make out what they said.

Then the little maid turned to us again and said clearly, and in our own good English:

“ We will show you the way in, though Diego says not, because the men are not always kind to strangers and send them away. But you are wrecked and cannot go on, and that is what I tell Diego, and I will tell Uncle Jack so.”

“ And who may Uncle Jack be? ” inquired Tom Appleton.

"He be Captain John Vane," said she. "He owns our island, or the most of it, and the men do as he says. And he will not be pleased much, I think, to see you; but I will make him so, for you have no vessel to sail away in."

She spoke so quaintly and so seriously, and with such an odd flavour of foreignness to the sound of her English, that I must have smiled at it, but that she looked full into our faces with great, honest, brown eyes, like the young deer that start back from the river's edge as one glides suddenly upon them. She had, withal, a little of the startled and anxious look that these gentle creatures have, so that I would not have offended her for all the world.

"And what is your name, pretty one?" asked Elias, who had a daring and a confident way with women, that many liked. I thought the little maid deemed him too free, by her looks; yet she answered, "It is Mary Vane;" and said no more than that.

"And the island, ahead, what is that?" continued Tom Appleton.

"The men call it Round House," she answered; "but the Indian chief that comes to see us calls it by another name." And she gave the Indian name of it.

Now this Indian name be the familiar one of the island among our colonists to-day; and I am loth to set it down here, lest by doing so I bring any contempt upon the honest men that live there now and who do ill toward none; but 'tis enough to say that we had come not far from our own estimate, and were, indeed, within that vast territory called Maine. And this island lies not four leagues out from the shores thereof.

Then the little maid spoke again to the man at the oars, who seemed to be a sort of servant for her, and he fell to rowing once more; and, she trimming in the two little shoulder-of-mutton sails of the pinnace, they drew a breath of wind from the land and the pinnace went on ahead of us toward the island.

“ ‘Tis a trim little wench,” said Elias; and I liked him not for saying it, for she had borne herself as gently as any maid of our town of Boston, and did not deserve to be spoken of thus, simply because of her being here in this wild place. “ I’d like to know the sort of a crow’s nest this be,” Elias added. “ We are like not to be made much of, by what the girl says and by the face of that rogue with her. What the devil of an odd pair they are!” And he chuckled as he watched the black man knot his muscles at the oars.

As for me, I was watching the little maid, from the wonder and strangeness of finding her there; and to look at her, was to wonder more. For she was dressed not uncouthly nor in homespun, as young women would be for the most part in so remote a place. But rather was she dressed richly, and, indeed, with much more of finery and adornment than the laws of our Massachusetts Bay Colony did allow even to the wealthiest, save on grand occasions.

Her skirt was of a finely woven cloth, such as we did get from the wreck back of Eastham, and of which we were told by the man that bought some of it quietly from Ephraim that it was made in France; her waist was of a dainty embroidered stuff, with flowers worked, or woven,

into the pattern of it; and she wore stockings that seemed to be as fine as those that Cousin Mercy took a liking to; and there were good shoes of a bright, soft leather — not moccasins, as the Indians make — on her feet; and, moreover, these had buckles on them that shone as if they might be made of silver.

Strangest of all, I did see, when our boat was close alongside theirs, that on her left hand were two rings of gold; and in each of these were stones that sparkled as though they were rare gems, being in colour, part of them red, and the others colourless, but the light dancing in them. She wore no bonnet, but, twisted in and about her hair, like a turban that the women in the Spanish islands wear, was a silken 'kerchief.

I did guess that the little maid was in age somewhere betwixt fifteen and sixteen, though slight and small for her years; but the look in her eyes had about that much of experience and knowledge of life in them — and she would be seventeen years old, come Christmas time, as I knew afterwards.

Withal, I could but think that, had our great Cotton Mather beheld her, he would have cried out in amazement and wrath against such wanton bedecking and such unchristian homage to the beauty of the flesh. Yet I thought it did not become the little maid so badly, because there was that in her face and in her eyes that would put a shame upon wantonness; though, had I been an elder brother to her, I should have admonished her to put away the rings till she were older.

However, she was naught to me but a little guide,

leading the way to a haven and a rest from storm, and it were no matter to concern me what she wore or what was her behaviour. Still, as I say, I liked not the way Elias spoke of her.

We came now to where we could look on into the harbour, and could see that it was formed by a reach of the sea running up in between the great island we had long sighted and a small island lying over adjacent, barren and rock-bound. On either hand at the entrance to this thoroughfare were great blocks of ledge, like black monsters set on guard. And all the rim of the harbour made by the reach was of the solid rock, as it need be, for the waters were ever restless here, swinging either in or out swiftly, with the turning of the tides, and ever beating on the shores as they ran.

Then we saw that the harbour was really no harbour at all; that is, it was not landlocked, but the sea made clear through between the two islands, so that the only safe place for a vessel to lie in all kinds of weather was in a pool, or basin, made by the hollowing in of one shore of the smaller island, where a dozen good boats might ride safe from storm.

We saw, too, as we entered, that the general slope of the land was on an incline upward from the reach; and that a dense growth of pine and a few spruce and oak climbed the slope of the hills till they could go no farther, the cliffs on all but the western side of the island going up sheer from the water's edge. But we could see little more, then, for it was growing to be dusk as we came in to a landing-place on the shore of the larger island.

Then there came shortly down to the shore a band of six men, wearing each a good suit of doublet and breeches of some fine, soft leather, oiled against the rain, and having each a short bastard-musket slung by his bandolier. And one of these, who seemed to be the leader, wore a great belt about his waist, with pistols sticking in it, and a great poniard also. It was he whom the little maid ran up to, as he stepped out on the landing; and she threw her arms about him and spoke to him softly. He was Captain John, or Jack, Vane, we judged by this; and a striking man he was, not from an exceeding stature, but by reason of his great breadth of chest, such as I have never seen upon another man, save Will Endicott — but he was a bigger man in every way and well proportioned.

This Captain John Vane was, I say, a man to be noticed among others, because of this exceeding breadth of chest and, also, by his manner of carrying himself, being in appearance one of authority and dressed more like a gentleman, or a cavalier, than a fisherman or sailor.

Now was there no hand of welcome extended by him or by any other of the five with him; but, instead, he came forward and demanded very roughly to know who we were and what we wanted.

To this, Tom Appleton, being wretched with our troubles, and famishing, as were all of us, retorted sharply that we were honest men, met with shipwreck, having left our boat to go to pieces on the rocks; and that as to what we wanted, it must appear evident from our situation, and that no man, that called himself such, should refuse us shelter.

At this, the eyes of Captain John Vane snapped angrily, and he advanced a step or two toward Tom Appleton as though he would be pleased to dirk him; but Tom Appleton stood calmly, having what is oftentimes the best of defences — that is, not any.

“ You have a bold tongue in your head, man,” cried Captain John Vane. “ You are like to be from Wales, or Cornwall perhaps, and meddling where there’s no need, there being no refusal in my hearing of a harbour and shelter — that is, for the night; and you can take yourselves off by the noon of to-morrow, we being poor men here, living by the sea and not enough to winter us and you, too.”

He had no more words with us, but said something to the Cuban in Spanish and then strode away, abruptly, up the hill, with the others following, the little maid by his side, and he caressing her and stroking her hair.

Then the Cuban signed for us to go along with him, and he led us to what seemed to be a fish-house close by the shore, made of logs and some sawed timber. This was filled with nets and hogsheads of brine, with fish pickling in them, and some lances and harpoons. All these showed vaguely by the light of a single candle which he got for us. He uttered a few words, of no meaning to us, and went away, leaving us to curse the place and these heartless men, thinking they had cared nothing that we were starving. But the Cuban came again in a little while, leaving for us a great trencher with some cooked meat and boiled codfish and potatoes on it; and he showed us where a spring bubbled out under a ledge near

the cabin, which was the greatest refreshment we could have. Also he gave us a pint of aqua-vitæ and a couple of pewter mugs to drink out of.

We ate heartily — and would have eaten more, if we had had it; and we warmed ourselves with the brandy, and tried to plan for the morrow, but were too worn and drowsy. So we soon fell over on the floor, with our sail-cloth over us, and slept very well.

When it was barely daybreak, Tom Appleton woke me up, softly, not disturbing the others, saying he would go and explore a bit and wished me with him. So we went out together, leaving Elbridge and Elias asleep. Then Tom Appleton said he had observed, on the night before, a way up along the reach, a smoke rising as from a chimney, in a different direction than that taken by the men when they had left us; and it might be there were others upon the island than Captain Vane and his men.

Nor did Tom Appleton's shrewdness disappoint us; for, when we had walked about a quarter of a mile along the shore, we came upon a cabin, with the land cleared all about it, with some vegetables and Indian corn growing, and a small sailboat moored just off the land. We went up to this cabin, and a man and boy appeared in the doorway armed with muskets; but they lowered these when they saw there were no more of us, and that we were unarmed and peaceable.

It proved of great fortune to us to discover these persons; for, when we had told them of our misadventures, and of our reception at the hands of the men, they said we had as good a right to come upon the island as any-

body, there being no settled town and no select-men to pass upon our eligibility. The land, they said, was for anybody that should occupy it in the king's name; and they had cleared this land and had been upon the island before these strange men had come.

I wondered then how they had escaped massacre at the hands of the Indians, who could come out in good weather in their canoes from the mainland; but presently the man's wife came out of the cabin into the dooryard, carrying a baby in her arms, and I saw that she was a full-blooded Indian girl.

He said the men had sailed into the harbour, first, some twelve years back, in a sloop of thirty odd tons, and had built themselves a fortification and mounted guns to protect themselves against the savages; that they had come and gone at intervals, and that now and then a vessel came, apparently to trade with them.

This man's name we found to be Ezra Bradford; but how he came to this island, and why, and whether he were at all akin to the people of prominence in our colony, of that name, I have never known. He knew the value of our English coin, however, and on Tom Appleton's offering him the worth of the stuff in it, he gave us two good axes, a spade and shovel, and the loan of a great two-handled saw for making boards, besides some provisions.

Also he gave us leave to settle upon a piece of land that he claimed, but had not cleared, just to the north of his own habitation; and he would be glad to have us for neighbours, as we were peaceably inclined.

Then Tom Appleton and I lost no moments in getting

back to our companions. We roused them up, and we all four set out without delay for Ezra Bradford's. He gave us a breakfast and made us his guests; after which, he and his boy accompanying us, we went straight to the piece of land he had spoken of, taking along our carpenter's tools and the sail-cloth we had saved, and rowing our boat up along the shore.

We fell to at once and began cutting the trees, to build us a cabin. Here, shortly, there appeared two men of Captain Vane's band, and inquired what we were about. We answered, promptly and with assurance, that we were about to settle on this place in the king's name, and had a right to; at which they went away again, hurriedly.

Then we were most anxious for many hours over what was to happen, and fearful of being attacked; but, for some reason or other, they had concluded to leave us to ourselves, and did not come near us. But we slept not soundly that night, nor for many more, standing guard against surprise. Yet we saw nothing of them, except at a distance, for a considerable time.

CHAPTER XI

THE ISLAND OF ROUND HOUSE

HERE, then, in this autumn of the year 1717, were we oddly circumstanced; having set out from our town of Boston to go a-fishing, and now we found ourselves swept away and cast ashore in the great wilderness of Maine. Nor had we anything to show for our enterprise, but a little money two hundred miles or more out of our reach, a vessel hung up on the ledges, and fish and all other sea creatures copartners with us in its possession, and the ownership of an unfinished log house on a strange island.

However, there was life and spirit strong within us, and we set about heartily and with good faces to build us the best thing we could fashion for a habitation. For we foresaw we should probably winter where we were, unless we were driven away by Captain Vane and his men.

It was, moreover, a pretty spot that had been offered us to settle on; for it lay in a quiet interval, between two hills that wore in all the days of the year their winter garments of pine and spruce, densely grown. These cast a gracious shadow over us in summer, and so filtered the icy blasts of winter through their thick branches that the winds, even then, came tempered and curbed against our cabin.

There sprang, too, out of the breasts of the hills above us, many pure springs of water. These trickled down darkly through beds of fern and arbutus and twin-flower, in their seasons, each in its own way of winding and turning, till they came all to a confluence a mile above us, and each and all more joyous with the meeting. So they sang one to another, and came laughing and murmuring together, and flowing in a little whirling floss past our very doorway, on the way to the sea.

We worked, as I say, industriously on our cabin, and made good progress, having the assistance of Ezra Bradford and his boy much of the time.

At one end we laid up a great hearth of stone, which was exceedingly difficult to do, filling in the interstices with clay. In this manner, too, we made quite a respectable chimney.

So, by the time the November weather was upon us, we were housed against it tolerably well. Of wood to burn, it grew all around about us; but as to our winter's food, it gave us much anxiety, for we had lost all our tackle for fishing, with the *Venture*, and Ezra Bradford had no supply of it beyond his own needs.

However, we had a few lengths of rope that were laced on to the spare sails we had saved. We unlayed the strands of these, and oiled them and tied them together and made some fairly serviceable fish-lines, got us a few hooks from Ezra Bradford, and did our fishing in that way.

We ate no more of what we got now than we could barely get along with, being mindful of the winter; and

we split and cleaned the rest, setting them to cure on flakes in the sun.

Then, one day, being emboldened by our needs, and seeing that Captain Vane and his men were not of a mind at present to destroy us, Tom Appleton and I resolved to go up and see them. We hoped to buy from them a musket, Tom Appleton having the money to pay for one. We went back along the shore to the place of our first landing, and then ascended the incline leading to the home of the strange men.

We had sighted this abode before, in our exploring, and knew it to be about three-quarters of a mile, or a little more, up from the shore. Yet from the shore one could get no glimpse of it, since it was hidden cunningly among the trees.

When we had gone up about half a mile from the shore, on a gentle rise of the land, we came upon a pitch of it that was more abrupt, ascending quite steeply to a plateau. Here, on this steeper incline, we saw the readiness of these men to meet an attack; for the greater part of the hillside here was shorn clear of all growth, so as to afford no protection to an enemy. Yet, at the very brow of it, was there left a fringe of the evergreens that screened the habitation from view, even from sea.

Just as we stepped from the cleared land into this last thicket there suddenly appeared from behind a great tree, where he had been seated, a tall fellow, carrying a musket, which he levelled full at us, crying out for us to halt.

“What do you do here?” he asked. “You be not wanted by Captain Vane hereabouts, I think.”

“ Why, we be just a bit more neighbourly inclined than you,” replied Tom Appleton, with a smile, knowing how to be in a good humour and of a most civil demeanour when the butt of the musket was at another man’s shoulder; “ and, since we have had no call from you, we wish not to be lacking in civility now that we be neighbours; and have come to pay our respects to Captain Vane.”

“ You may as well pay them to the devil and done with it, an he be in the mood he has been in these three months now,” said the man with the musket.

“ Well, then, we’ll pay them to you, my good man,” responded Tom Appleton — I think he meant no incivility — “ and thank you for lowering the end of your gun away from our heads; for, sure ’twere no credit to a man’s marksmanship to hit another at this distance.”

Upon which the man, with a grin, did indeed set his musket by the butt upon the earth, and stood, holding the barrel of it. For, as I say, Tom Appleton had a *hail-fellow* way that was not easily to be denied.

“ You’ll be losing time going on farther,” said the man, “ since the captain be sore over your landing, and he liking to live a quiet life here, undisturbed. Sure, I know he has no use for you, and you may better be gone about your business than anger him.”

“ Why, for that matter, let him be angered and go hang,” said Tom Appleton to me, softly. “ A man may as well be shot as left to starve.” And he added, for the fellow to hear, “ But let us go on to the gate, at least, and have parley with him for a minute. He can but send us away an he will not see us.”

"I'm not so sure of that," replied the fellow. However, he let us pass, and gave a call on a boatswain's whistle, for them in the barricade to take heed.

So we stepped out on the other side of the thicket and, once again, found ourselves in a wide clearing on the summit of the plateau; and this cleared space was for a distance of some rods before one came to the home of the strange men. Soon we came upon a great wall, or stockade, made of small tree trunks, sharpened and driven into the ground, and sharpened again at the top. This made a great oblong inclosure; but as to the houses inside of it, we could not see what they were like.

There was a gate leading into this inclosure, that had been open, but had swung to at the sound of the fellow's whistle; so that now there was no place for us to enter by, and we dared not attempt to scale the wall even if it were possible.

Presently, however, there came a man, peering over the top of the palisades at us, but said not a single word, as though he were dumb; and it seems he was waiting instructions from within.

"We would have a word with Captain Vane, since we be his neighbours," called out Tom Appleton. "Tell him we be Massachusetts Bay men, and no freebooters nor Frenchmen nor Quakers; but seek only to deal with him for a musket and some things we be greatly in need of."

At this the man's head sank below the paling, and we heard him get down and walk away. He came again shortly and looked down at us blankly, shaking his head.

Nor did he say a word, but repeated this gesture and disappeared.

So Tom Appleton and I were forced to go away, baffled, having come no nearer to Captain Vane and his band than before. However, we did wonder greatly at their surliness, and conjectured that perchance they were in hiding and were sour at being discovered. But now we felt free to go about over the island and explore it from end to end, feeling that we should not be molested.

We found the character of it to be most rugged, frowning down upon the open sea to the south and east and northeast, with cliffs that rose a hundred and more feet sheer from the water. Nor were these great cliffs seemingly less aggressive than the sea that warred against them for ever; for, even on days of quietness, when the sea, never still, did but ride up to the foot of them and then gallop back without breaking a lance, have I seen a great mass of the rock cleave from the lofty wall and go crashing down, like an iron gauntlet cast before the sea-riders for a challenge.

And often have I seen the ocean take up this challenge, and ride in furiously with all its armies, till the whole island was rife with the tumult, and the voice of many angry waters cried loudly of the strife between sea and shore.

Often did the cold, gray fogs come stealing in from sea, and rolled like smoke amid the heavy branches of the pines and spruce, blotting them out one by one, and every other thing, quick and inanimate, till all the island lay hidden. Then, wrapped about in its gray folds, it was a

menace and a peril to any ship that should chance to come that way. There it waited, with its sharp points of ledge couched like lances, to unhorse a good ship from its sea-saddle, and eager to tilt with a whole armada, lying treacherously in its fog ambuscade. Then have I seen the swift west wind strip its covering of fog from the island, like a cloak rent and torn, and all the hills and woods leap forth shining, and every glittering pinnacle and spur of the ledges taking absolution from the sun for their evil intended in the hour of fog.

In size, the island was, I judged, a little more than four miles long from north to south, and some three miles wide from east to west in its two widest parts; but in the middle of this line drawn from east to west there was a curving of the shore so that it was something less than two there. Dense was the growth over most of the island, being sheltered by the stone cliffs to seaward, and the land sloping down prettily to the reach.

So, also, because of the vigour of the vegetation upon the island, was it perilous to wander about it heedlessly, or by night — at least, along the line of the shore. For now and then there was a deep, wedge-shaped slice taken out of the rim of the island and washed away completely, so that of a sudden a deep ravine would open at one's feet; and this all hidden by the brush and tangle that grew close to its brink, with the sea ever swirling in and striving unceasingly to cleave its way farther into the rock. Of these pitfalls, there was one not far from our own habitation; and we might easily have gone into it but that we were forewarned.

Now the days went by that were of small profit to us, being bleak and dreary, and the spray freezing upon our garments in our fishing, and the cold tormenting us.

As the month drew on to its close, and we were hard upon that day of Thanksgiving that be a greater day than any other holiday among our colonists, we were, I must confess, gloomy in mind, and our spirits no longer flowing on bravely, but in the doldrums. Our thoughts traversed often the waste of the sea that surged between this island and our own snug town, and we were sorely tried, though saying little.

However, when the day before Thanksgiving had arrived, and we had naught to celebrate the morrow with, save codfish and lobster, nor even a cup of tea to wash these down with, but only water boiling hot and a few dried wintergreen leaves for flavouring, I was of a mind to try my hand at shooting. So I got neighbour Bradford to give me the loan of his musket for the afternoon, with one extra charge of powder and shot. Then I set out up the slope of the interval between the hills, to see if I might not hit upon a wild turkey; for they were still upon the island, though growing cautious and wary from the hunting of Captain Vane's men.

It was slippery travelling, I recall, for we had had a snowfall that had been nearly dissolved with a rain at the finish, and now there was a thin coating of crust and ice, with the leaves and low shrubs showing through the latter, as though encased in glass. Up I scrambled about a mile, and entered upon a thicket of oak clumps with some pines emerging more loftily from these. Then, all

at once, I heard the call of the great bird I was seeking; and I crouched low and stole noiselessly from thicket to thicket, peering and listening.

Soon I saw a fluttering and flapping of a dark wing amid the heavy lower branches of a pine; and, though I could not clearly make out the fowl, I judged where the rest of him must lie upon the branch, and so rested my gun upon an oak twig for sure aim. But, even as I did this, the bird seemed to take sudden alarm from a noise near by, and rose up in full sight, stretching out its long neck and gaunt head, and all tense for flight. Then I let drive, having the creature well covered, and it came down flopping, with a loud noise, dying, to the ground.

But, all unexpectedly, at this, there came the scream of a woman, startled and terrified at the firing; and, the next moment, a young girl darted out from the thicket close by, and slipped and fell upon the icy ground. Now my heart was breaking as I ran to lift her up, for I feared that I had shot her. Then deep was my thankfulness, as I raised her to her feet, to find her unhurt, save from fright, and her fall having no more than bruised her slightly. And the young woman that stood now before me was Mary Vane.

“Oh! are you hurt?” I cried, even as I saw she seemed not to be, for I was grieving and shameful.

She answered that she was not, though overcome and trembling from the fright; for she had not seen nor heard the great bird, and had thought the shot was meant for her, believing the Indians were attacking.

Now that we had thus spoken, I knew scarce what more

to say to her; nor she to me. For we had not met again till now, since the evening she had guided us to harbour; and even in that time, so brief, she seemed to have grown much older, being no longer a child, but a young woman, near to seventeen come the week before Christmas.

Moreover, she was dressed now against the weather, more maturely, with skirts coming nearer to the ground, and was neatly and warmly clad; wearing a jacket of the fur of the coast seal, that was very silvery and pretty, and a cap of the same. So that there seemed somehow to be a far greater distance between us than when she had sat at the tiller of the little pinnace, in her short skirts and shoes with bright buckles; and I thought that even Elias would not address her too familiarly now.

However, I was wrathful against the strange men that had left us to starve, and here was the first and only chance I had had to speak of it, not having been given a hearing by any other of them. So I asked of Mary Vane why it was they would have naught to do with us.

“ ‘Tis no less than downright cruelty and savagery,” I said, warming to it, “ to leave us in this plight, with the winter coming on and we likely to die of hunger before ‘tis over. The Indians, themselves, could do scarce worse, for sure it be as heartless and cruel to go by and let men perish of famine as to shoot them down and tomahawk them, like the savages at Haverhill.”

Then I paused suddenly, and could have bitten my tongue off for my words; for Mary Vane was looking at me, sorely troubled and hurt, with the tears standing in

her soft brown eyes; and I saw she was grieving and sorry for us.

“ It be no fault of mine, and please do not speak angrily to me,” she said, simply; “ for I have told the men often it was cruel to leave you so, and begged them to send you the food and the muskets you asked for. But Uncle Jack is hard and stern always about it and will not listen to me, though he be kind to me in other ways. He says you must go away and leave the island, and the way to get you to do it is to starve you out; so he will not allow of anything being sent to you.

“ But,” she added, quickly, “ if you will only wait here, or come along with me, I will ask him again for you, though he has forbidden me to talk of you more.”

“ No,” I answered, anxious now to make amends for having spoken so rudely; “ you shall take no risk of angering him for us, since I know he be a man that it is bad to arouse; and I see you have done all you could for us, and I thank you for it, and hope you will forgive me for frightening you and for being harsh to you, also.”

Then she looked at me roguishly and, with a twinkle in her wonderful eyes, said she were not afraid of me at all, but of the fearful noise of the gun and of the falling of the great bird; and that I need not make apology for what I had said, because the men were heartless and deserved it. And she went away, smiling graciously, but with tears still in her eyes.

So I took the wild turkey I had shot, and slung it over my shoulder, and walked home very soberly, thinking of the strange meeting I had had, and forgetting to exult

over the Thanksgiving dinner that I had brought down with one lucky musket-shot. Nor, for just what reason I, myself, could not have given, did I tell of my adventure till Elbridge and Elias had turned in and were sleeping, smacking their lips in their dreams over to-morrow's feast; and then I told it to Tom Appleton, who was like an elder brother to me.

I say I could give no good reason for my reticence, only I am sure that had Elias heard me and spoken lightly or slightly of Mary Vane I should have struck him. And as for Tom Appleton, he did amuse me mightily by wishing that in some way I could have confided to Mary Vane that we were hungering greatly for a little tobacco.

Having filled our skins, on this Thanksgiving Day, with the wild turkey, which Tom Appleton roasted admirably on a spit before the coals, and having shared a half-pint of liquor sent us by neighbour Bradford, we were forced to go on short rations again for many a day.

Then on a day, about a week before Christmas, we heard much firing up at the barricade, and were greatly aroused and anxious over it, fearing the men had fallen to fighting and might come our way in the heat of it. But, later, on our reconnoitring cautiously, we heard them singing lustily, and heard other sounds, also, as though of carousal.

We judged, and rightly, that the guns had been touched off by way of a salute; but knew not, then, that it was the little maid's birthday and that the captain and his men were celebrating it. So, indeed, deeming themselves secure by reason of the weather and the snow, the men

were observing it freely and without restraint. For they set no watch through all that day and night, and were, moreover, well fuddled with drink; else a certain piece of good fortune could not have happened to us.

It chanced that some two hours after sundown, the night falling quickly and very black, there came a knock at our door that sent our hearts to our mouths, since it was a thing that had not happened before, and seemed almost like witchcraft. But we flung open the door, and there stood the Cuban who had been in the boat with the little maid.

He came into the cabin very stealthily and oddly, as though fearful for what he was doing, and set down on the floor a great pack that he carried over his back. Nor did he tarry for us to open this, but stole out into the night again and made off as secretly as he had come.

This pack, on being opened, was like a gift from the good St. Nicholas, himself, inasmuch as it contained in so great measure the things we longed most for, as though our minds had been read by the giver. There were, among other things, two good hams, a package of East India tea, a little sugar, a small rundlet of Spanish wine, containing about two gallons, and, best of all, some two pounds of good, black smoking tobacco, which we found to be very strong, and lasted the longer for that. Finally, there was an old pistol, of a foreign make, long in the barrel, and heavy, and with this a few charges of powder and shot.

Now at the sight of so much treasure of food, with which we should make merry at Christmas, along with mankind of better fortune on sea and land, — though it was not a

day made of in our colony, — there was great mystification and conjecture in the minds of Elias and Elbridge as to how it came to be sent us. At first, they considered that the men had relented toward us and sent us this by way of a peace-offering and an overture to further friendliness; but they held not long to that interpretation of the affair, and came to a conclusion, after argument, that the Cuban had stolen it all, in return for the coin Tom Appleton had given to him when we first landed.

As for Tom Appleton and me, we wasted no time nor thought in foolish conjecturing, knowing right well in our own minds who had got the fellow to bring it, either with or without Captain Vane's knowledge.

CHAPTER XII

WILL COLE'S MEN

So we kept our Christmas when the day came, not so noisily and roughly as they upon the hill, but in good English fashion.

We were early astir on that day, and had a great backlog of oak rolled into the hearth and a flaming sea of fire tossing and roaring all day long, from smaller sticks of oak heaped in. Then, as we had taken two fat bunnies in our traps the night before, we made these, one into a sort of meat-pie, with a thin crust of flour that we found in the pack, and shortened after a fashion with fat; and the other we turned before the live coals for a roast.

Now, when this was all cooked to a pretty crispness, and we had set it out on our rude table, with tea steaming alongside, and the rundlet of Madeira on end, and, moreover the black tobacco laid invitingly near and sending out its rich fragrance to titillate our nostrils — when we had done all this, then we were greedy to devour the mess.

However, this clever Tom Appleton did put a gentle curb upon us, as we were about to begin, by pouring us out each a dram of the Madeira, and holding up his mug and offering a health to the giver of our feast. So did both he and I drink it quietly and thoughtfully, not boisterously as the others, who had not the same bent of mind

over it as we, nor saw a woman's bright eyes dance in the sparkle of the wine.

Then did we fall to, as men that have taken a rich prize upon the sea, and are eager for the sacking of its cabins and its hold. Nor was there aught to clear away when we had done, and the cheeks of each man seemed no longer hollow, and his waistcoat swelling like a sail that has a fair breeze within its bunt.

Lastly, did each of us fetch a hand into his jacket pocket for his pipe and bring it forth lovingly and with caressing, thankful that the sea had not filched away that, also.

Now, as I look back upon this winter of disappointment and distress, do these few days stand forth as in a flood of sunlight; and all the rest are bleak and dreary and shrouded often in fog of hopelessness and despair.

Hard put to it we were soon, to eke out our diminishing store of food and deny ourselves of it from day to day; for we were ever hungry from dawn to dark, and our faces growing thin, and our bodies hollowing like fish after they have done their spawning. So in these days, that were as the lean kine, devouring those that had been better, we made much of fire to comfort us, having the means for that always at our door, and were at least warm when we needed warmth the most.

Yet, there was a single other week amid our famine when we did not want for food, but had a feast fit for the king — or for Edward Teach. For I went one day and followed up the little floss that ran past our door. And as I walked up over the ridges and curvings where the grip of winter had caught and held frozen the waters in

the very posture of their leaping and their falling, I could see, down through the clear black ice, the little stream still flowing, deep in its bed, and going on to the sea.

I went on and on up the slippery ascent, and came at length to a pool I had seen the fall before, but had lacked the time to fish in then. There, through the ice, I soon took a pretty string of trout, and slid home rejoicing like a boy. These, and a few rabbits, were all we had till spring to eke out our rations of dried and smoked stuff; so that we were, as I say, lean and hungry and ever prowling for food like wild creatures.

However, the spring did come again, and we had still, each one of us, a strong, firm clutch upon the life that be dear, though irksome. Now the early days of April fell warm, and loosened up the bands of ice over fields and woods and ledges; and many little brooks, falling steeply, shook off their fetters and leaped and laughed as of yore. Then the air grew more lenient with the warmth of May, and the ice-pools lay rotting and treacherous, and the marshes about them all queachy and muddy, and the traps of the quicksands set for unwary feet.

So, June arriving, and the days now long and genial, we fell back into our way of working and contriving as of the fall before, and were bethinking ourselves, too, of some manner of planting and raising a crop of Indian corn to set by for use later, if need be. Not that we thought of having to pass another winter upon this island; but we wished to be forehanded, come what would.

Likewise, we entered busily upon our fishing, rigging up a little mast and sail for our yawl-boat, and took not

only cod and other fish by day but hake and eels by night, having soon a store of them set to drying.

Then it happened that I went out one morning, toward the last of June, to tend some fish-pots off the southern and western entrance to the thoroughfare and along the shore of the little island contiguous, where the men of Captain Vane's band never bothered us. It was, I judged, by the feel of things and the sounds that do tell of the time of day to those familiar with them, about an hour before the light should come in the east, and, therefore, about three hours after midnight. But many usual signs were lacking for the verification of this, the morning coming in foggy, so I could but guess the time roughly.

With the dulness of the day and the earliness of my rising, I was sleepy when I got out to the pots; and so, when I found there would be still an hour more of the flooding of the tide, I drew a great piece of the sail-cloth about my head and shoulders, having made the boat fast to a stake, and laid me down in the bottom of the yawl for another nap.

I know not how long I slept, and only that I came suddenly out of it, hearing the play of oars in the oar-locks, and the sound of men's voices. Rousing up quickly, I saw no one at first, for the fog was most dense; but presently there came in upon the reach, and near to where I sat, crouching, a ship's boat, with four men rowing and two men, wrapped in cloaks, astern.

At first, being a bit stupid with drowsiness, I did assume them to be the men of Captain Vane's band; and I wondered much what they would be about, this time

of day and in such gray weather, since they made little of fishing.

Then, in a moment, I saw the boat to be not any that I had ever seen before, and the men not the men that dwelt upon the hill. I felt a great thrill of joy and exultation go tingling through me, for I doubted not there was some vessel lying farther out and sending in a boat to find the harbour.

Now I saw an end to our long, dreary isolation, and I stood up in my boat and opened my mouth to let out a shout to hail them; and what shut my jaws again and left the cry still choking in my throat I know not, unless it were the act of God. For suddenly the notion seized me that I would wait a bit, and watch out and see an I could discover what manner of men these were; in that perchance they might be freebooters, and not men to be startled suddenly by a shadow leaping forth at them out of the fog. So, in truth, was this as narrow an escape for me as a man might have in a whole lifetime; for, had they seen me then, no man had ever seen me alive thereafter.

As it was, I had made some slight disturbance, and I saw, as I crouched again and lay hidden in the shadow of the shore, the two men in the stern spring up and peer about them in the fog; and the fellows at the oars paused in their rowing.

“What the plague might that be?” I heard one of them exclaim.

“Some fish, I allow, meshed over yonder,” said the other. “There may be nets set out from the shore.

And, by Heaven ! Tom Derry, you are a man of nerves this morning, like a jack-in-the-box ; for you did jump like one at the splash of a fish — which is no wonder ; for, man, you have not known the hour of being lain in your bunk for two weeks on the run, from drinking Windward Island rum till you could not see the fall of the dice."

" No more than you, Jack Harwood," retorted the other, sharply. " Nor did I jump harder or quicker than you ; for you were up like a cork out of a bottle."

" Well, never mind," said the first man. " Let's get on with this heaving, and be out before the fog lifts ; for Will Cole will have Dan Baldrick and his whole nest out of here and hanged from the water-butts — which slick Dan escaped before — if we do work fast, as he did urge us."

Then I saw that the men were heaving a lead astern and making soundings, as they went slowly along, to get the depth of water in the reach ; and glad was I to have kept my tongue in my head and not have the men upon me. But the next moment my heart was in my throat and my hopes dead ; for I foresaw that here was no deliverance, but only a new phase of trouble. Also did the name " Dan Baldrick " fall strangely upon my ears, it being a name I had heard before.

The boat went on out of sight, but was not long in coming down the reach again ; for it seems they had seen the sloop of Captain Vane's men and marked it for further action, and knew by its lying in there that the reach had good water for their own vessel. They went by where I lay, with a great spurt ; for they had got what they came

for, and the four sailors were putting their backs into their rowing.

Now I sat in my boat, sorely puzzled for a brief time as to what I should do; for I had no great hankering to mix with what I knew was coming. Moreover, could I have seen Captain John Vane go to the yard-arm and still have been consoled for his loss. Yet did I perceive that we might be in worse straits to have the men routed out and killed or carried away, and these new men overrunning the island.

Moreover, did I think some regarding Mary Vane, who had told me she were not afraid of me, and said it prettily and roguishly, so that I had wondered since if she were making fun of me; and I saw again her soft brown eyes with the tears springing to them, and remembered of her sorrow for us, and of her kindness.

So I waited no longer, but started out upon the reach and got across to the other side, quickly. Then, when I had come near to the fringe of the wood, I gave out a halloo of warning, being eligible for a bullet an I should burst suddenly out of the fog upon the guard. However, there was no delay for me this time, for the man brought me in on the run to Captain Vane. I went in through the heavy gate, swung back for me, and was led on toward the largest of three houses that occupied the enclosure. There, on the porch of this house, soon appeared Captain Vane himself.

He was no genial soul to hold converse with now, for he was just roused from sleep; nor had he, I judged, gone soberly to bed, for his eyes were red and rheumy, and star-

ing out under black, bushy brows, and the thick shock of his hair was matted on his forehead. Also was he half-dressed, in woollen drawers and shirt, and he spoke thickly and hoarsely.

“ Come now, lad,” he cried, gripping me by an arm and glaring out at me, as a man striving angrily to come to his full consciousness, and wrathful with himself and all others for being heavy-witted, “ give it out quickly — this boat you saw — and the men in it — did you hear them speak? And by the blood of the king! An you were drowsing and dreaming and saw phantoms in the fog, and no live men, you'll give no more alarms.”

“ They were phantoms and witches for aught I know,” I answered, hotly, for it rasped me against the grain to be threatened with death when I had come on a good errand; “ but I heard one of them say that Will Cole, whoever he may be, would have Dan Baldrick and his whole nest routed out of here and hanged from water-butts — which death, he said, Dan Baldrick had once before escaped. Those be the words as near as I can give them, and if it be a help to you to know it, then I see no cause for you to threaten me for bringing you the warning.”

Now at this, Captain Vane jumped like a man stung; and there was no more stupor left in him than in a man cornered and valuing his life dear. Nor did he pay the least heed to me nor to the angry retort I had made, but rushed back into his house and cried loudly for one Will Lewis, who, it seems, was his mainstay, to hurry up. This man came running in, and was not, either, a pleasant man to look upon; for he was a great, gross fellow, with red

eyes and heavy-hanging, weather-beaten jowls like a bloodhound, and his left hand had been lopped away clean by the wrist.

“ ‘Tis Will Cole and a crew coming in,” cried Captain Vane to him. “ Get out the men lively, and bring up the stuff from the rock, and see the powder be kept dry from this cursed fog.”

Then did Captain Vane, his man going about his business, turn again upon me in a flash, and stand and eye me for a moment, silently. Then he said, shortly:

“ Can you fight? ”

I suppose I was slow in answering, the inquiry being abrupt and confusing to me; for he beat his great fist down against a table and cried:

“ Can you shoot? Can you fire a gun? Do you know the working of a musket? ”

“ Yes, I can shoot,” I answered, “ that is, at wild-fowl and game, but never have I shot at men.”

“ You’ll do,” he said, grimly. “ And will you fight with us, and will the others of you? ”

“ I will fight with you,” I answered; for I had made up my mind to that already and could speak promptly—which I think pleased him — “ but as for the others, I must see them first and speak with them; though I think they will fight.”

“ They better,” he cried, fiercely, “ an they know what’s good for them. Tell them it’s Captain John Vane that says it.”

“ They’ll fight without compulsion or threat, an they decide that way,” I said, firmly, “ for they be men of

courage. But I would say 'twere better not to threaten men who yet be free to fight on either side they see fit."

I think he had not seen the matter in just that light before, and was a bit taken aback by it, needing our reinforcement; for he paused a moment and seemed to let his fury simmer. Then he put a hand upon my shoulder and smiled grimly — and it was not a smile to find enjoyment in.

"Young man," he said, "you have a quick answer ready, and a tongue it rolls smoothly from; and perhaps there be a glimmer of truth in what you say. But I be not used to hearing sharp replies, not even from these men here, — but give them, myself, — and it were better for you to be not so free. Now get back to your comrades and see that you all come back here quickly. And, stay! Bring that other fellow and his boy along, for they be able to shoot, I know, and have the guns for it, and the powder gotten from me.

"As for this Baldrick they are seeking, I know not of him; but I do know Will Cole, and he will spare no man he has at his mercy, whether he fight or not. So you be all dead men, as well as we, let him gain foothold here; and that be no lie to frighten you."

So I saw at once that this Will Cole must be a pirate; and, indeed, he was a bold and cruel one, serving no less a master than Captain Edward Teach, and sent now by him to destroy these men. I perceived, moreover, that this Captain Vane did know him well. Aye, and he feared him, too, by the look in his eyes; though in what calling he had known Will Cole I could only conjecture.

When I had gone down the hill a piece and was half-way, or a little more, to our cabin, there came a lifting of the fog for a brief moment, not of all its gray fabric, but a sudden thinning of its clouds. I looked out upon the sea and saw a fine ketch, of more than half a hundred tons, and like to mount a score of guns and carry two score men. Nor did this serve to put me on a keen edge for the fray, since we should be outnumbered perhaps three or four to one. However, the fog shut in again, though not so heavily as before, and I went on to my comrades.

Now as I came in upon them, there were all three making a jubilation of it, having espied the vessel; and they seized me and clapped me by the hand, thinking, as I had, that the time of our deliverance was near. So that it wrenched me hard to cast a blight upon their happiness, and tell them that the ketch was a rover and bearing in to destroy the men upon the hill, and that I had sworn to fight with these.

However, we all went together up the hill, first taking our tool-chest and some other useful things back into the woods and hiding them. As for our boat, we had left it down upon the shore by the landing-place; and we were sorry for that, but could not help it now.

We did get neighbour Bradford to accompany us, which surprised me, he being, as I say, a silent, strange man and shy to join with others. But he was, it seems, a courageous man, and went along largely for that. But his son, he would not let join us, leaving him to care for the Indian mother and baby; and they went and hid themselves away safely in the woods, and suffered no harm.

It was now about five of the morning, lighting ever so gradually with the coming in of the day, but no sun showing; and withal, the fog dropping down nastily from the tree branches. In the breast of this fog the ketch was shut from view; but out of the silence and quietude of the morning, there came up to our ears the sound of oars sweeping the water, by which we knew that they were not relying only upon the light breeze to bring the ketch in, but had boats out ahead with lines to drag her.

By the sounds, they were some way out yet, so it might be the half of an hour ere they should be landed.

As we went on, I did conjecture much as to this Will Cole and his enmity for Captain Vane, and think it most strange that I should come to share in the outcome of it. And had I known of the doings of Edward Teach and Will Cole and Captain John Vane, and how deep a hatred rankled in the hearts of both Captain Teach and Will Cole against this Captain Vane, and how they yearned to put the noose upon him, then should I have had little stomach left for fighting. Indeed, I thought of home as I went up to the stockade, and wondered what Ephraim and Mercy were doing on this day.

CHAPTER XIII

WE FIGHT WILL COLE'S MEN

WHEN we had gone in through the gate and come up to the house of Captain Vane, he stepped forth to meet us; and a different man he was from the Captain Vane I had seen so shortly before. Now his ill temper was in a measure under subjection to his better judgment, and, as such, he was a man of much subtlety; and I had rather go against many another man than him, even were I Will Cole, or Captain Teach himself.

He gave a hand to each of us, and was not angered because the boy had not come, but said it was good for him to go with the mother, although she might have come to the barricade and remained along with the women there. And this was the first we had heard of other women there than Mary Vane, though wondering who cared for her.

Then Captain Vane had them bring out to us each a good dram of brandy, to burn the fog from our throats. So, too, he had served to each man a kid of meat, chopped and cooked into a stew, with dough-balls, such as sailors get, sogging therein; for he would not have us fight on hungry stomachs.

Then he leered in his wolfish way, as we devoured the mess, and allowed we had had not much bounty at his hands before. But no man had ever suffered, he said,

that lent a hand to Captain Vane — which I have good reason to deny — and there would be good amends when we had put the rascal, Will Cole, to flight.

Will Lewis came presently, and had for us each a strong jerkin of leather, lined with quilting, and having over the breast a cuirass, or centrepiece, of metal that would retard a bullet. There was, too, a leathern cap, or helmet, for the head, to abate the stroke of a cutlass, and a musket and pistols all round, with a bag of flints and a horn of powder to sling from the neck.

As I looked around, I saw there had been able preparations made for the fray, and that this fortification was no Jericho to be levelled with mere noise. At the front of the stockade, where an attack might be looked for, there being ravines and gullies and other hindrances on the rear approaches to the plateau, were set up two drakes of brass, that were now well shotted and ready for the match. This artillery was not to be seen from the approach to the fort, there being a false front covering the embrasure in which each was placed.

At the two rear corners of the stockade were two guns of iron, mounted not by way of a surprise, but with their noses sticking out of the walls. By each of these four guns was there a wooden platform, with powder and balls and pieces of quick-match thereon.

Of us to defend the stockade there were the five in our party, and Captain Vane and nine more, making fifteen in all. These men of Captain Vane's, to give them names as we knew them later, were: William Lewis, who was a first mate, by rights; Robert Mackay, a ship-smith; John

Trask, George Rawlins, Lawrence Sylvester, Ralph Burr, Robert Hawden, or Hayden,—I know not which,—George Watkins, and the Cuban. These last were seamen, and I think Cotton Mather would not have been pleased with them. However, for the business now in hand, they were not out of place, being men that looked to have been born for fighting.

As for the women that Captain Vane had made mention of, I saw none of them, they being sheltered in the rear part of the captain's house, with thick walls between them and any bullets that might come that way.

Presently the man, John Trask, who was the same as had stopped Tom Appleton and me in the woods before the stockade, ran in to tell us that Will Cole's men were landing on the beach in the harbour in great numbers; that he had counted twenty-five, but that there were more of them coming ashore. At this, Captain Vane told off nine of us to go out, with him, to ambush the pirates from the woods as they came up the slope. For this he took all of our party and four of his own men, leaving Will Lewis and four men under his command to work the gates as we should return on the run, and to warn if the pirates appeared elsewhere.

We ten went down to the thicket that bordered the steep approach from the beach and took up our places as Captain Vane directed, with orders to see that our flints were fixed and the priming dry in our muskets. Each man of us had, too, an extra musket to lay by his side, so he could pick it up and freshen the priming and fire again quickly, and thus get in two shots before we ran.

Now we heard soon the voices of Will Cole's men as they called to one another softly, for they had not heard nor seen a sign of life on our part, and doubtless hoped to take the stockade by surprise. So did we hear some curses roundly sworn; for all of the way was not good for men unfamiliar with it, and the fog giving them little distance of vision, and the ground wet, and sludgy in places.

In all, we judged there were near forty of them, and knew, afterwards, that they numbered just five more than that. Now when we had the great bulk of them only a few rods away, and saw the faces of the nearest coming weirdly to be distinguished out of the fog, Captain Vane did call softly for us to fire; and, being ready and quivering for the word, we all let fly at once, with the big, black, shadowy lump of humanity for a target. Nor would one hear in all the infernal regions, I fancy, a more hideous and bestial screeching than escaped from the throats of these pirates when the bullets flew among them.

Then, in the first flurry of their surprise, they did get the second volley, which threw them into such a state that the whole pack of them, save Will Cole and one or two others, made a break back for cover and left the field to us.

However, Captain Vane was not to be enticed by this brief success into waiting here for them again, knowing the cunning and determination of Will Cole; and so he withdrew us to the stockade, and we went in without the scratch upon a man.

When Will Cole had got his men together again upon

the shore, and had cursed them hard for their cowardice, and himself, also, for his folly, — and likewise, most of all, Captain John Vane, — he set about doing what he should have done in the first place; that is, he divided his force into four squads, with orders to go up the hill spread out, and not bunched like a flock of partridge; but to come together at the call, for a charge upon the thicket in force.

And this was carried out; for we heard, at the sound of a whistle, the noise and shock of the fierce rush they made, and even some firing here and there, owing to the fog deceiving them with vain shadows. But they did only plunge into bushes and stumppage, so that Captain Vane laughed loudly at them; and I saw he was a man that revelled in fighting and had no fear of it, in that he could laugh at such a thing as that.

There were in the wood, then, making ready to charge upon us, thirty-seven of them, including Will Cole, they having lost eight of their number in our first ambush, three shot dead and five wounded. But, before they came on, Will Cole did call out to us through a ship's trumpet, advising us to yield and trust to their mercy, to wit :

“ Here, you men, I mean Ralph Burr and George Rawlins and John Trask and the rest of you, all but you, Dan Baldrick, and you, Will Lewis, you all come out here and give yourselves up; and we'll give you quarter and take you aboard ship again and no more said and done. And you, Dan Baldrick, we'll hang you to a good tall tree and leave you there; but you, Will Lewis, I'll give you a chance and take you off and let the Old Man say whether

you swing or not. Now there's the time for me to light and smoke a pipe for you to make your choice in; and, after that, there's no quarter for any man we get alive. There's fifty of us and ten of you, so don't be fools."

Now Will Cole had no sooner delivered himself of this, with the last word still ringing in his throat, than Captain John Vane — or Dan Baldrick — leaped up on the walk around the stockade and called out, without waiting for argument with his men concerning the matter. Nor did he need any trumpet to make himself heard, for the roar of his voice was like a bull's that be baited into fury.

" You, Will Cole," he cried, " lie, like a Spaniard or a Frenchman, as you always did. We want no quarter from you, nor from Teach, either; nor from Ed Grace nor John Evans, nor the pack of you. Tell Teach he can come with a hundred men and a seventy-four. We've got thirty stout Englishmen now, and twenty more to come next month from the mainland. And as for fifty men, you've counted twice over and dead ones, too."

This was bluster and braggadocio — and each man knew the other lied — but I think Captain Vane's boast of thirty men had its effect on Will Cole's crew, and particularly when they had had a taste of our defence.

But soon they came on, without warning, spread out widely to approach on three sides of the defences, with their guns slung, and axes and pikes in their hands to fight at close quarters with on the stockade. Their plan was, to scale the palisades, and they carried several short ladders for that purpose. We met them with a grievous fire of musketry, however, having our force well disposed

at the three points of attack; and I think the extent of our firing puzzled and disconcerted them, for, with more men to meet than they had reckoned on and extra guns on our part, there were not a few of them hit.

So, on this attack, there were only seven of them that got over the stockade, the others being beaten back and thrown from the wall. These seven fought desperately till five of them had fallen; and the other two fled back up over the logs.

Still, we had had three men put out of action, though none killed, and had they come again quickly they must have overpowered us by reason of numbers. But it seems they liked not to lose so many men, and, indeed, had not counted on anything like so stubborn a resistance. So they went back to the shore, to begin all over again, in a way they might have done in the first place had they not been so ardent.

They got ashore two guns of good calibre, mounted them on wheels made for landing purposes, and dragged them up to where they commanded the great gate of the barricade. And all the while we were all wondering what they would be about. I had even some hope they might not come again; but Captain Vane knew better concerning Will Cole, and was not idle this while. So, by the time they were ready for another attempt, we were loaded and primed for them.

We learned with no uncertainty what they had been about; for, all of a sudden, the two guns broke out in a terrific roar, and the heavy shot from them crashed clean through the stout oak planking of the great

gate, and went on and tore off a corner of one of the houses.

At this, I did expect the brass drakes mounted at the front of the stockade would make reply, they not having spoken as yet. But, it seems, this Captain Vane was a clever rogue and had a use for them later, so would not reveal them. However, having the position of the enemy's guns betrayed by the smoke and flame, we poured in a continuous volleying of muskets upon them, and must have caused them to replace more than one gunner, judging by the outcries.

Still, there was no halting of the fire from their cannon, longer than it took to load the pieces; and the gate had a bad breach in it, nor could it withstand the battering much longer. At this point I did look at Captain Vane to see what he would order — and lo! the smile upon his face was like unto that of a wretch that sees his enemy go up to the gallows; and I wondered what were the humour of this crisis.

Then Captain Vane sent three men back to a shed beside a great rock that stood as high as a house; and they rolled out from it a cannon, of a make I knew not the name of, but it was shorter and thicker in the barrel than a culverin and capable of taking an enormous quantity of shot. This they loaded so heavily that the wonder is it did not burst at the discharge. The piece, all shotted, they brought up to command the approach to the gate, placing it just beside the entrance.

Then the two brass drakes on either side of the gate were trained to concur at a point a little distance from the

entrance, so that all three cannon should focus about the same. And lastly, the rest of us not needed at the pieces were set ready upon the wall with loaded muskets.

Now did Captain Vane, leering ominously, station a man at either side of the gate, which was made to open in the centre and swing back in halves. And at the next firing of the two cannon, and just as the heavy shot had torn and splintered their way through the wood, the halves of the gate swung open a mere foot or two, as if it had been caused by the impact.

This it seems, and as Captain Vane had figured, was the thing Will Cole was waiting and prepared for. For, the next instant, and as the parts of the gates hung there, divided and enticing, the whole pirate crew burst out from shelter and came on in a pack, near thirty of them, for the entrance to the stockade.

Captain Vane stood by the touch-hole of the big gun, holding the piece of match in his own hand. Will Lewis and George Rawlins were at the other two. And I did wonder that any man could wait so patiently as did Captain Vane, with the wild, howling crew coming down upon him. But, all at once, he lifted the match as a signal and brought the lighted end of it down upon the priming of the gun. Even so did Will Lewis and George Rawlins; and the three guns bellowed out in one wild concert, sweeping a clean pathway through the mass of men as a wind would take a line of trees in a forest. And we, adding our muskets to the chorus, did swell the carnage and spread the terror and complete the rout of Will Cole's men.

Quickly the massy gates swung to again, and the huge bolts and bars were thrown into place; but, for that there was no need, and the gates might have swung wide and a child could have guarded them; for of the crew that had come on there were nine stretched out dead, and four more were wounded so they could not run away, and others more or less hurt. In all, there were not more than seventeen or eighteen at the most that got away with sound skins; and, including Will Cole, they did not cease running till they had gained the shore.

When they had gone aboard their ship, Will Cole despatched a fellow up to us, with a flag of truce, begging of Captain Vane permission for them to carry away their wounded. This, Captain Vane acceded to, being glad to be rid of them, but stipulating that no harm should be done to his vessel that lay anchored off the other shore; which Will Cole promised. So four men brought up a stretcher and carried all the wounded pirates away, save three that were so grievously hurt they could not be moved. Of which three, I may say, one died the next day and we buried him, and the others recovered, having been born to swing, and took up with Captain Vane's men.

As for Will Cole, having given a pirate's word, he was bound by it no longer than it took him to get his wounded men aboard, leaving his dead for us to bury; and then he warped the ketch in abreast Captain Vane's sloop and brought his larboard guns to bear on her hull, and fired into her until the mast fell away and she took aflame and burned near to the water's edge and then sank.

After which, on the following morning, there being a

fair wind through the reach, he stood out of it and sailed away and we saw him no more, Captain Teach and he having other business on hand off the Carolinas more profitable.

Take it all in all, we had come off lightly, there being only eight out of the fifteen of us wounded, and the most of these not seriously hurt. Sylvester was the worst, for a bullet had razed along his head and it affected his brain. Moreover, he had a cutlass wound in the thigh, which was a sore cut; so he was unconscious some hours after the fight. The men, Mackay and Burr, were shot through the body and were, I recall, on their backs for weeks, but being of a breed tenacious of life were saved for future wantonness.

My good Tom Appleton had a gash from the swipe of a cutlass across his cheek and kept the scar thereof evermore to mark the place. And I, myself, was the least hurt of those wounded, having felt the nipping of a bullet early in the fight and finding it had stung me in the left shoulder; which was a mere flesh-wound and would quickly heal over, with cleansing and ointment.

But, for the most part, was Captain Vane furious over the loss of his vessel; and I feared he would put an end to the men that had fallen into his hands; but, it seems, his malice was to Will Cole mostly, and he gave the wounded pirates as good care as he did his own men.

When the pirates had been some time gone away — I mean just after the fight — and the firing had ceased and we had begun to pick up the wounded, there ran out of a door of Captain Vane's house three women, Cuban women

by their complexion and dress — and, indeed, the men had married them in the city of Havana. They were the wives of Robert Mackay and Will Lewis and Ralph Burr; and the woman that claimed Robert Mackay was a young girl of not more than twenty-five, of a striking beauty, with hair ebony black, and dark, flashing eyes, her teeth very white and pearly, and her complexion rich and perfect of its shade.

She was, I discovered later, not lacking in breeding and some accomplishments, having been schooled in a convent of Havana. She had run away with Mackay, who was really a fine and handsome fellow—though a wanton rogue—and who did make a gallant figure ashore, with fine apparel and gold to spend freely.

These women, finding their husbands sorely wounded, were nigh frantic with grief, screaming and casting themselves down beside them and carrying on, as women of that exotic temperament, not having our English self-control, are wont to do. As for Mary Vane, we saw her not, since she was overcome with the horror of it all and would not venture forth.

Now we saw soon how lightly such men as these look upon battle and bloodshed, and be carnal-minded only after the revelry of living : for they had no sooner got the dead men put under ground and the wounded cared for after a fashion, than they entered upon a great carousal over their vanquishment of Will Cole's crew.

They rolled in from a storehouse a cask of wine that must have held some ten gallons and broached it in the big living-room of Captain Vane's house. Also did they

fetch in brandy and other liquors, seeming to have plentiful store of the stuff; and no man's cup would be let to stay empty long, — nor full either, — for they poured and drank as I had never seen the like before, except aboard the ship of Captain Teach.

But strangest of all was this great room of Captain Vane's to which we did all come in; for it was of a variance from its surroundings, having naught in it, it would seem, indigenous to the lonely island whereon it stood. It had been furnished all from the cabin of a ship, or, I should think, rather, from more than one, being set about with desks and tables and cabinets of fine wood, richly polished and better even than could be seen in many of our finest houses in Boston.

Especially did I take notice of two gun-racks, and a broad table that reflected the light of a candle even as burnished metal or crystal. These seemed very fine in the grain, and hard, and of a rich umber shade for the most part, though varied with veinings of a blacker, and also of a lighter, hue. This wood I learned to be of the sort called mahogany, and I had never seen any of it before, except aboard Teach's vessel, it not having come into the colonies at this date.

Also before the hearth was there a pair of huge brass fire-dogs that had been cast solid of the metal. So that the furnishing of this room was, as I say, most incongruous and not like to be found elsewhere in all the world within walls of mere logs and roughly sawed timbers.

These fellows made no account of the stuff, in their wantonness, but heaped their food and dishes upon the

fine tables, and banged them now with their cups as though they had been the rude equipment of a village tavern. And throughout all, I did observe that this Captain Vane was a cunning fellow, and masterful; for, though he drank ever as grossly as any, he was, by the hardness of his head and the capacity of his stomach, the one man that had his wits about him.

So, once in the night, amid the tossing of much liquor, there came up to him the man, George Watkins, who was half-maudlin, and slapped him over the shoulder, and bawled out that Dan Baldrick was a match for any Will Cole or Edward Teach that ever sailed the high seas. And at this the captain did take offence, and raised his heavy pewter drinking-cup and dealt the fellow an ugly blow near the temples therewith, crying out:

“Take that from Dan Baldrick, fool! And call me Jack Vane so long as we lie here in this place.”

The man staggered from the blow and toppled over on the floor; but made a clutch at the other as he went down, and caught him by the doublet, and tore it so that there was laid bare the broad breast of Captain Vane. Thereon, as the light shone, I saw tattooed in red and blue ink the figure of a full-rigged ship; a masterly piece of art as sailors deem such things, intricately pricked out even to the smaller ropes and rigging and the gun-ports along the hull.

Now did this sudden revelation startle me and fill my brain of a burning fever; for there flashed into my mind the words I had heard from the lips of a man doomed to die, fourteen years ago in the grim prison of Boston; and

they seemed to ring in my ears even as though they came from some corner of the room:

“Dan-o'-the-Ship! Who is he? I wish I had him by the throat! I wish he was lying there in that corner, now, asking me for mercy. I curse him now and for ever!”

So here I saw was “Black Dan,” “Dan-o'-the-Ship;” whom the man had hated with all the hatred of one that sees the gaunt scaffold before his eyes. And here, too, was the old puzzle come leaping into life again at a bound; for before me in this room sat he who might know the secret of the paper I had long lost interest in, and should have forgotten, but that it yet remained where I had put it away, in the locket that hung about my neck.

CHAPTER XIV

MARY VANE

I SAW these things, I say, like a flash of lightning when one has not been aware of the clouds out of whose breasts it comes darting. Yet I knew not how to prove my conclusion save by putting the question bluntly to this man. And, as I thought upon it from day to day following, the more was I bound and restrained by a hesitancy growing out of a distrust of him, and my remembrance, also, of how he had served the fellow Watkins for the intrusion upon his alias.

Now, however, for the moment and throughout all this wild night my brain was tormented with the thing. So, when the night had worn on to the ebbing of its blackness, and the slack hour of the morning had come just preceding the flooding of the light, and the lifelessness of that hour had crept upon these men, and they slept as they had sprawled upon the floor, still did this discovery prod and spur me on to wakefulness. When, at length, I did lose myself, even then was I driven far and wide by it in my dreams as though I were hag-ridden.

Then, the sun blazing triumphantly once more, and the fog clouds thinning before its rays, we saw the ketch make sail and go on out of the reach; and, with that, we went

down to the shore, where we beheld the extent of the mischief Will Cole's men had done.

Our own yawl-boat was a sorry thing, having the ribs and planking of it all smashed. Likewise were the two smaller boats of the men, one of them the little pinnace, rendered useless. And of the vessel, there was but the charred stump of the mast to be seen a foot or two under water.

Now, the fighting being over and the ketch going down into the distance, we four were of a mind to get back to our own habitation, so we went and gave Captain Vane word of it. He was, I must admit, very handsome and liberal on this occasion; for he would have us go back with him to the stockade, and he gave to us each a good musket and a cutlass, and each a good suit of leather, jacket and doublet and breeches, of which we were in great need.

And to me, because I had been the one to give the alarm, he presented a handsome pair of pistols, intricately inlaid along the barrels with gold work, such as they do in Eastern countries. With these, also, a good leather belt, with sockets to hold the weapons.

Moreover, with this presentation, he did give a hand to me most fatherly, and smile at me as graciously as a man might upon another into whom he would lay a cutlass an it served his purpose.

The next day, too, he did despatch several of his men to us, bringing a store of salt beef and other food stuff, and a quantity of powder and shot, together with a big rundlet of wine and some tobacco.

The upshot of the whole was, to our minds, therefore, that the men upon the hill were pirates, themselves, and had got this store by the plunder and ravishing of merchant ships; and it was plain there had been a falling out at some time between them and Teach and Will Cole, and they had sought refuge on this lonely island; which accounted for their attitude toward us. Indeed, the wonder is they had not driven us away, unless it were that Mary Vane had pleaded to some purpose in our behalf.

Well, by and by, when we were settled again and had gone to work to make us some kind of a small boat to replace the one smashed, only larger, to carry a spritsail, I did sit down with Tom Appleton one night, the others being asleep, and tell him of the conviction I had regarding Captain John Vane and the paper I carried. And when I had recalled to both our minds the words of the man in the prison regarding Dan Baldrick, the coincidences did, indeed, appeal to Tom Appleton as well as to me.

It was easy to see how, there being several men, or even two, aboard a vessel having the name "Dan," sailors would likely hit upon the distinguishing of them by means of this great tattooed design upon the breast of one, and call him "Dan-o'-the-Ship." Moreover, this man was past middle age, and would have been somewhere about thirty, fourteen years ago. Also was he swarthy, more so even than the others, with hair and brows and beard very black, which would accord with his being sometimes called "Black Dan."

For all this, and although I did remind Tom Appleton

of the man's remark of yellow money piled high, and urged that Dan-o'-the-Ship might know the intent and meaning of the cryptogram, still he was not keen about it.

I think, for one thing, he had heard so much of Cousin Ephraim's obsession; and thought too much of me to have my mind go thus awry. Also, being by instinct honest, there was in him a natural aversion and distrust of this man.

So, for the time being, I did let the matter lie in abeyance — that is, outwardly; yet my brain was for ever squirming and twisting uncomfortably about it, like a fish that be hung up by the gills.

Now I come to the time that Elias forsook us and went to dwell with the men upon the hill, and became one of Captain Vane's crew. And the manner of Elias's going was this:

We had been building for ourselves a new boat, when some of Vane's men came over our way where we were at work upon the shore. When they had observed the cleverness of Tom Appleton, and how nice a turn of the hand he had at such work, they saw he was a man that could be of great service to them. This, it seems, they reported to Captain Vane, flattering us also to the extent of telling him we were all no fools at boat-building.

This thing put us in so good a light with Captain Vane that he resolved to enlist us all in his enterprises, having no doubt but we would all ultimately accept of the invitation, because he had seen many other men, as good as we, decry piracy loudly and come to make bold pirates

in the end. However, he would not broach the project to us save by indirection, and the real nature of it left for us to surmise. Nor was it put to us all together, so it would be made a subject of discussion amongst us. But his manner was to meet with us singly, when the others were not by, and confide to each man of us in confidence that he deemed him a bold, smart fellow who was wasting his talents among the other three, when he might be easily in a way of winning a fortune at a stroke.

As for Tom Appleton and Elbridge Carver and myself, we saw at once that the innuendo was plainly piracy and nothing less; and, discovering soon each that the other had been asked to go and live among the men of the stockade, we talked the matter over all together and decided to give Captain Vane as fair and unoffending an answer as we could, that we were plain fishermen, and sought only to get back in good time to our own Boston town.

We did not mark it then — but recalled it later — that Elias was silent in the mooting of the thing, and seemingly acquiescent in our decision. But, going out one morning, with his musket slung by his shoulder, as though for shooting, he did not come back; and word got to us later that he was among Captain Vane's men.

There was no break between us, however, over this new turn of affairs, since Captain Vane had a use for us in any event, which was the raising up and rebuilding of his vessel; and there was a measure of agreement, or understanding, between him and us, that, if the thing could be accomplished, he would take us off from this

island and set us ashore in the vicinity of the Massachusetts Bay. So we went to work for him willingly.

Tom Appleton made a clever contrivance, with the use of tackle, by which the stern of the vessel was raised and held partly out of water with empty hogsheads. Then we patched and botched at the thing for weeks, raising the hulk a little from time to time and making temporary repair of it, till we got it at length where a deal of the water could be pumped out and the hull finally floated, sufficiently to bring it in on the beach. There we careened it and worked on it to good purpose at low water, through weeks of hard labour.

As for masts, of which we should need two, it being the design of Captain Vane to convert the vessel's rig into that of a hermaphrodite brig, and for the rigging necessary, there was no lack of either; for there were several good sticks lying up on shore, being the masts of some wreck, or saved in the dismantling of a vessel; and there was a quantity of the latter stuff, gotten likewise in the one way or the other.

But it was all of July and August before the hull was ready for new masts and rigging; because, for one thing, the men of the stockade would not work with any method or regularity, but as the fit seized them, spending much time in carousal.

In the course of this, on an afternoon in early August, there being a lull in the work on the vessel, I set me out alone to follow up the course of the stream; which I was so fond of doing that the quiet dark water lying half-asleep in the shadow of this familiar bank, and the leaping,

flashing water running down over that cascade, seemed near and friendly to me, and of old acquaintance. Also did I cut me an alder stick and strove to lead the pretty fish astray, as I had done so often before.

But the day was warm and no fish rose; and after a time I grew drowsy with the sultriness, and lazy, withal, and lay me down in a little clump of bush by the bank and went off soundly to sleep. Then it would be about the hour before the first shading of twilight that I awoke, for the little twittering of the birds and many other noises of nature had the tone as of the wearing out of the day in them.

And as I lay, rousing gradually and deliciously, as a healthy man does from slumber, listening to the pleasant sound of the falling water and the bird utterances, there came to be distinguished by me a sound that was not of these, but strange and muffled, and coming now and again out of the gurgling and murmuring of the floss like a sob. So I raised me up softly after a time, when I had got the drowsiness shaken off, and stole along the bank a little way, to see whence this strange sound might come.

But when I had gone only a rod, or a little more, in this sly fashion, I was put suddenly to shame for it; for, all at once, at a turn of the stream, in the shelter of a little arbour made by some low trees, with the wild grapes running up over them, I came upon a woman weeping. She was seated beside the floss, with a hand to her face, as though to shade her eyes from the fading rays of the sun; and I could see her slight frame quiver and tremble with the grief that racked her.

Now, coming silently upon her in this manner, I was,

indeed, abashed and sorry; and it seemed even as though I had stolen into a room whereof she had bolted the door to hide away. So I would have gone as softly as I had come, seeing she was as yet unaware of my intrusion, but a dead branch broke under my feet and, though it was a slight thing, it sounded in that stillness like the firing of a pistol.

She sprang to her feet, did Mary Vane, and gave a little cry of alarm and started to run away; but when she saw it was I she paused and stood hesitatingly.

“ You said you were not afraid of me the last time we met in this wood, but of the musket I carried and the fearful report of it,” said I. For I was thrown into confusion, as well as she, and said this because I thought of nothing else. “ Now,” I added, “ I be unarmed, having come only for fishing, and am just waked from sleep — and I think it was you who waked me, for I heard a sound as of some one crying as I roused, and came to see what it were.”

“ Indeed, I am not afraid of you now,” said she; “ but you came upon me so sudden, and out of the silence, like a ghost-man or a witch; and I had crept down here to be out of sight of the men, and to be alone.”

Now I saw, as she said this, that her eyes were dimmed from long weeping, and there was sorrow in her voice as of one not seized with sudden grief but carrying a burden in the heart day by day. And, liking not to see a woman grieving, lonely, thus — at least so fair a one as Mary Vane — I yearned to say a thing that would comfort her, but had not wit to go about it cleverly.

" You have been very kind to us," I ventured, " and we know now that had it not been for you the men would have driven us away; and we (meaning myself) would be grieved to know of any harm coming to you, and we (I) would be glad to help you if you would tell us (me) how."

Then she looked at me earnestly out of her brave eyes, and said, with a strange abruptness:

" Do not join the men ! Have naught to do with them that you can help. You do not know them as I have come to know them. Oh, they be cruel and wicked. And to think I knew naught what would be going on all these years — but, oh, I have learned at last. And, oh, the horror it has been, these days since the fight ! The cursing and the drinking; and the boasting of the things they have done, and plan to do."

" But," I cried, " does not your uncle, Captain John Vane, protect you against them and their carousing?"

" Ah, indeed," she answered, sadly, " I know no longer now if he be uncle of mine or not; though why I doubt it, I have no means of telling. But he seems further away from me day by day; though he has, indeed, been kind, and would not have me know, all these years, the life they led, and I did think he went a-trading in the vessel when he was gone away. But now he seems to care not what I do know, and says I shall make a brave lass yet, when I do grieve over it and beg him to have no more part in such wickedness."

" And Elias," I asked, hesitatingly, and knowing then in my heart that her answer would strike deep, " does he

not say aught to help you? He has been no such man as these, and comes of fine people in our town."

"Oh," she replied, smiling a little, "he does, indeed, say much to me — and more than I would ask for; for he tells me I am a lady — and — very beautiful — those were the words — but I should rather hear it from one that has not said the like to so many women."

"Pray how do you know that?" I asked.

"Because I do," said she. Which be an unanswerable reply, especially when one is of the same mind; so I said no more about it.

Now by this time we had gone on together, talking of more than I can remember, and walking side by side (though I had asked no leave, nor had she granted any; but it seemed natural to us and understood) till we had come near to the stockade. Then, as we stood for a moment, I said, after a fashion, that Tom and Elbridge and I were hopeful ever of leaving this place; and that when the time came, if she would, she might go along with us and we would care for her gladly, in return to her goodness to us, and that she should fall into kindly hands in our town.

And this, I did think often afterwards, was most stupidly put, and was not what I would have said at all, but was only the frittering of irresolution and of a mind muddled; and that I should far better have waited till I did know what it really was within me that was seeking expression.

Certain it was, the words gave little or no comfort to Mary Vane; and she did but shake her head sadly and walk away.

However, we were in the way of meeting more often now; for it seems she had a little pathway picked out amid the tangle, from the stockade down to the floss, it being the same that we had traversed that day; and it would not deter her from seeking the quiet nook she were fond of, to know that I was like to come that way. Nor did I fear much longer that my coming would seem an intrusion, being greeted with sweet looks, and eyes that came at length to say more than the lips dared utter.

Whereby I came to a realization, of a day, that I was wearing near to my heart a locket, whereon was a woman's face that had been a sweet and fanciful comfort and adviser to me; but that now it was as a palimpsest, and, on the ivory, another woman's face was limned by the painting of my mind — and that face was Mary Vane's.

For I swear that by some strange trick of fancy — or was it more and deeper than this? — whenever I did loose the golden clasp and look in upon this gentle lady, there came a marvellous and entralling transformation before my eyes; for the lines of the face altered not so much as they did grow more maidenly; and a tenderer and more youthful light did sparkle in the eyes. Thus, by degrees, the face upon the ivory blended prettily into that of Mary Vane. And so gently and so imperceptibly and so elusive was this process of transformation, that I could not follow it and account for it; but only knew the face did change thus by an evolution of youthfulness from the one into the other.

Well, a man may think many strange thoughts and roam world-wide in his day-dreams, while he be fast

aground on the reefs of circumstances. So, all the while, were we busy at work for Captain Vane; and his men were eager now to have the work ended and the vessel under sail once more. It was some time in September that we got the masts stepped and the rigging set up, and sails cut over and refitted to her. Then the men dragged some guns down the hill and mounted them aboard, and the vessel was made ready for sea.

This put us into great apprehension; for we feared lest this Captain Vane, seeing we would not join with him, should give us the slip and sail away with all his crew, and leave us here marooned. So Tom Appleton, having done him good service, put the matter plainly, though courteously, before Captain Vane, reminding him that he had promised to give us passage with him when the time came for them to leave.

Captain Vane did avow solemnly and stoutly that he was not about to desert either us or the island; he was going only a cruising, which we had declined to take part in, and he would leave three of his men and the women at the stockade, to ensure us against his not returning. Moreover, he said this was a mere trial voyage of the vessel and of her equipment, and that he should go wide of the Massachusetts Bay colonists and only so far as a harbour in the province of New Hampshire, where he looked for an addition to his crew.

With this assurance we were forced to be content; and, indeed, when the vessel sailed away on a day in the latter part of September, there were left on shore, besides ourselves, the three men that had been worst wounded. Nor

could I see my old playfellow, Elias, embark with the others, without the memory of the days long ago running in my head, when he was Kidd and I was William Moore, and seeing now a sorry realization on the part of one of us of those early ambitions.

However, this voyage of Captain Vane and his men did surprise us much by reason of its brevity; for it seemed they had scarcely got out of sight before they were back again; that is, in a matter of four weeks, or less. Also, they did a thing that sorely disappointed us, in that they took a quantity of stuff out of the vessel, and stripped the sails from her, and were apparently of a mind to go no more voyaging.

So we saw we should be some time yet here in this place, but knew not the reason then of it, to wit: that the business of freebooting was even then getting what was nigh its death-blow; and that in this very month, a great man among them, one Major Stede Bonnett, was beaten in a hard battle off Cape Fear and taken prisoner and hanged; which, with other drawbacks coming soon after, abated somewhat the delights of pirating and sent a horde of the merry gentlemen to cover.

CHAPTER XV

A SWEETHEART AND A FRIEND

WE passed many days now perplexed with doubts as to whether we should get away from the island before the winter set in; and on my part there was much of conflicting emotion as to whether I cared, indeed, to go at all.

Then, when the month of October was nearing its close, Captain Vane did surprise us by stretching the sails again on the brig and preparing her as before for sea. In the last days of the month he set out, once more, and went on a voyage of a fortnight, and was back with a store of corn and dried fish bought of the Indians.

Yet they could not get from the Indians the stuff most wanted by them, which was good liquor; and the men were long ago sick of lying close in this place. So Captain Vane, to appease them, did consent to make another voyage which was to have been away to the southward. They set out again, about the end of the first week of November, and were in high feather over it. But here again, in about another fortnight, did they reappear, suddenly and unexpectedly, and were seized of a great activity.

They were in and out of the harbour all through the day-time, for several days, and took out to two small ledges, to the westward, a quantity of logs and other stuff, and

put up what seemed to us to be a makeshift shelter on each. From which we assumed they would do some manner of fishing there.

These little islands lay between ours and the mainland; the first, or nearer, being less than a quarter of a mile away, and the other about an equal distance from that. So that a ship coming up from the French or Spanish islands and bound on to the Canadas, and planning to keep our Maine coast in sight, would yet not care to go inside these ledges, but would wish to clear our larger island to seaward.

And herein was one chance in twenty that Captain Vane and his men were taking, having got wind in some way on their voyage that a French ship was bound north shortly and might come in near us.

But, as I say, this was then all unknown to us; and, in the meantime, we had come to a resolve no less than to get away with their vessel and make off with her, even though there were but three of us to sail her.

Also this resolve did include another and a greater one — if a lesser thing may ever include a greater — on my own part; and this other resolve did centre about Mary Vane. Yet was I puzzled and hesitant about the matter, knowing not what answer she would make to me.

Now other events did suddenly and strangely intervene between the planning of this project and the realizing of it; but we could not read the book of fate, so we worked and watched till matters took another course.

This November, I recall, was for the most part made up of days that were not to be enrolled upon the page of

winter, no snow having fallen, nor were they a reversion even to late summer, being too cold for that; but it was a sort of mongrel weather, breeding a litter of days that were heavy with fog, and listless, unnourished by sunlight.

Well, matters were in this state when the time of Thanksgiving would be near again; and I had gone to bed full of the project we had in mind, and my own project with it, and all uncertain concerning the matters; and I was turning them over and over in my brain till it was hot with the friction of much thinking. So I lay for long hours, envious of Tom and Elbridge that they could breathe so deep with heavy slumber.

After a time, when it would be, I judged, some two hours yet to midnight, I could endure no longer this baiting of nerves and brain. So I arose and dressed me and went to the door of our cabin and opened it, for a breath of the cool air, and to see if the stars were keeping me company. These were not to be seen, for a thin fog sufficed to hide their great light from the earth, and the moon would not rise till some hours later.

Despite this murkiness of the night, yet was the sea about us not all in darkness; for I discerned, away against the western sky, and flaring up weirdly from the vicinity of the two off-lying islands, a dull reddish glare.

The strangeness of this thing, nor its significance, did not appeal to my beleaguered brain for the moment; but, restless as I was, I buckled about me a thick woollen jerkin against the sharp sting of the night air, and, closing the door of our cabin softly behind me, went out to see if it would appear from down along shore what the men of the

stockade were doing with fire out upon the ledges by night.

As I went down along toward the southern and western end of the island, I saw the flare of the fires grow more intense and mount higher into the sky; and, now and again, with a little flaw of the wind, they would stream laterally along the sky-line, like ship's bunting flung to the breeze, blood-red and weird to behold. So, with this all unusual and startling thing before me, I was quickly broad awake and alert as at noonday; and the real inwardness of the ghastly business soon came home to me.

There in the sea, against the shroud of fog and on the curtain of the night, was being written a blazing lie by the men of the hill. There was treachery and deceit, foul and cruel, the luring of living men into their doom by false lights. For, whereas these flickering, shifting pillars of flame rose up from both the inner and outer ledges, and a vessel — if there were such — coming in from sea would reckon them as being by the nature of things on the great island, this island of ours, itself, lay dark and hidden and in ambuscade of fog.

Now the blood in all my veins grew hot as this thing was borne in on me, for it were plain to any man, what was intended. However, I knew not what to do; or rather, I did know I could avail nothing, and that what they planned must come to pass for aught of me, an it were the will of the Lord to let it be done.

But I saw, an the thing should come to pass, this were not the place to look for it; since, did their design carry true, and a vessel, that had made the passage before,

swing off to clear what it should take to be the great island, it would likely run in and strike fair against the tall cliffs that faced south, and seaward to southeast, which was a half-mile away from where I stood — that is, to where the huge ledge wall began to rise sheer from the sea. So I set me out to walk thither, but slowly, and with frequent listening and peering on ahead ; for I knew I should not be alone in my vigil upon the cliffs, the men of the stockade being somewhere abroad.

Going on thus, I felt the night wind blow softly in my face. Then, coming at one point in view of the shore, I saw that the tide was about an hour and a half to the time of the slack, and that in a half-hour more from that the set of the flood would be hard against us. So that from then until daybreak a vessel would come swinging in with the current ; and thus the lightness of the wind were a grievous misfortune, since there would be no power in it to help a ship beat back against the tide.

And now, coming up nearer to the cliffs, I heard the pounding of the surf about the feet of them, and saw for a short distance the deep heaving of the ocean ; and I knew from this great disturbance and strong pulsing of the sea that, when the turn of the tide should come, there would be small hope for a ship caught in the turbulence of the waters as they rushed in upon Round House.

Here, gazing out seaward and straining my eyes to penetrate the gauzy screen of fog, I did stumble and fall by stepping off a little knoll ; yet caught myself up again quickly, crying out only softly to myself, more from the surprise of the thing than from any hurt.

At this sound of my voice, there came another in response, close to my ear; and a slight, ghost-like figure flitted out of the fog and laid a hand lightly on my arm. The suddenness of this apparition, coming all unexpected and quick upon me, together with my fear of encountering the men of the stockade in their cruel business, threw me into a sweat of alarm; so that I gathered myself to meet an attack, and laid my right hand upon the good knife that was in my belt.

But this was all in the passing of a moment, and no longer than the time of a few quick beatings of the heart; for when I saw the little figure that had so affrighted me, and looked into the face that was upturned anxiously to mine, lo! it was that of her who had grown so dear to me. She was short of breath, with running or anxiety, and breathing quickly and tremulous.

“Do not go up there by the cliffs,” she cried, softly, and with a quaver of fear in her voice. “The men be hidden all along, on the lookout; and they are stark mad with drink and with the cruelty of what they mean to do. You are one against them all; and they will suffer no interference now. No! no! you must not go — say you will not — I pray you!”

“And how knew you that it was I here in the fog?” I asked; for I thought not so much of the danger, looking at her, as I was filled with wonderment and surprise to find her here.

“Oh, I have followed you from away back by the shore,” said she, but stopped short at that, shamed and timid at the confession. . “I did fear you might come to

harm," she added; "but I would have gone away again, an you had turned back to the cabin — but I would not have you fall into the hands of the men yonder."

Now, as I looked into the eyes of Mary Vane, from which the soul did shine, so that a man that was not blind might read, I did know that the strong tide of our love was at the flood; and that taken now, as the great poet doth say, it would lead us on to fortune and the golden goal of happiness; but which availed not of, the voyage of my life might, indeed, be bound henceforth in the shallows and miseries of loneliness and disappointment.

So I did put my arm about my Mary, and drew her close to me; and I called her by name, as I had never dared to do, — though yearning to often. Nor did she resist, nor take it to be unmannerly in me.

"Tell me, dear heart," I said, "why you would not have me go on into danger. Is it because you love me? For, indeed, I do love you more than all else in the world. Nor have I ever so loved another, and shall not again to the day I die."

To this she did make no answer, as yet; that is, by spoken word, since her heart was too full for that; but she threw her arms about my neck, and I had no need to beg for kisses, taking them as of right; and thus, perhaps, giving her no fair chance to reply.

Here it comes to me that I have written too plainly and unseemly, of this great and tenderest moment of my life; but, in truth, the memory of it did flash upon me strongly, so that I set it down before I thought.

Now we considered not, for the moment, of the dread

thing to come — my Mary and I — but sat us down upon the little knoll whereon I had tripped and fallen, even with the cold night mists falling heavily and drear upon us, and the thin fog fashioning about us a vapoury bower. And the flames out upon the ledges, bearing death in their bosoms to weary men upon the sea, shining red and phantom-like through the fog, were no more ominous and terrifying to us, but gleamed soft and mystical.

So we sat and waited there till the hour of midnight must have passed; for the waning moon rose and glimmered faintly through the curtains of fog and mist — though I had need of no other light than two bright stars that shone close into my eyes, with more of sweet mystery and wonder in them than the stars of the sky.

Along about the time of the rising of the moon, there came to our ears the rushing of the waters, and the sound of a thousand moanings in the hollow places of the ledges; for the turn of the tide had come, and the waters would be drawn in high and in great volume in their flood. And God help those that should be borne in with them.

All at once, when near an hour more had gone by, there was sent in to us from the blackness of the sea a sound that was not of its waters, nor of the moaning wind; nor was it cry of sea-bird, but human, as a voice, or call, that seemed to have enunciation, and was an utterance of some sort, through trumpet or otherwise, I know not what. But it roused us up and brought rushing back into our hearts the fear that had drawn us there; and we listened eagerly for the thing to have repetition.

Yet it came not again for seemingly a long time, having

carried far by some trick of the waves and air. We thought we had, perhaps, been deceived in the sound, when suddenly the truth was made manifest, fearfully and most grievously; for the sound of many voices came in with the rush of the waters, and, with that, the beating and flapping of a ship's canvas, as it does to little purpose in a feeble wind.

Then did Mary Vane press me by the hand and lead me on with her toward the cliffs; not directly, in the way I had been seeking, but in an oblique course, which would bring us out upon the rocks to the east of the great jutting of the cliff where its outermost point fronted the sea. There the rush of the waters, on their divided way to that eastern shore of the island, would be past us; the other half of the flood going on toward the reach.

"We shall be safe from the men here," she whispered. "They are all to the other side of the headland; for the wreckage that drifts this way is hard to get."

We had scarce time to climb the slope of the hill to the brow of the cliff and look out, as far as we could discern for the fog and mist, when the whole great tragedy unfolded before our eyes; and with that was shown the mighty power of the sea, unaided by wind or storm.

Out of the black obscurity there loomed a big brig, with sails thundering like the sound of tempest, and the cries of many men among the rigging and along her decks. On she came, with the fierce inrush of the tide, and no earthly power now able to divert her from its current; so that, with a deep groaning of its huge hull, and the harsh, discrepant creaking of its rigging, and the swinging

and swaying of its ponderous yards, and the loud trumpeting of commands, and the crying of men, she drove her bows hard on against the jagged rocks, and hung there, impaled and quivering.

Nor did ever a ship go to pieces quicker than this one; for, being held hard and fast by the bows, and lifted up astern by a great wave, her back was broken all in a minute; and the masts and spars fell down at the instant, threshing the water so that the sea-chaff flew half-way up to the brow of the cliffs.

For that matter, the whole fabric was soon as though it had been put into a giant pestle and beaten; for it was churned against the face of the rocks by the deep swell, and hammered into fragments in such way as no man may believe that has not seen the like with his own eyes. Yet, as I say, was there no storm, and even the sickly, blighted light of the moon glimmering faintly over the rocks and the wreckage.

Then, for a few short moments, from the gruelling mass of what had been the brig, there came to our ears wild cries of men whose lives had not yet been beaten out. Some were swept away, out of our sight, along the shore by the foot of the cliffs, clinging to spars and pieces of deck and stuff from the cargo; and of these, some were near to rescue, being carried past the ravines that made down through the cliffs; and they needed but a line thrown out to them, to bring them safe to shore.

But no man did this thing. Aye, and I do fear the worse, even, was done, such as it be a shame and humiliation to acknowledge as in the hearts of men to do. For, of

those that drifted on down toward the reach, not one was alive to tell of it when the morning came; and no man came alive out of the brig that night — save Will Endicott.

By which, it be a strange coincidence, that the hand of Providence did send me my two best comrades — and the best any man ever had — delivered, unscathed, from shipwreck, wherein most other men did perish.

It came about, by reason of the brig's striking near to the outermost and dividing end of the cliffs, that some of the wreckage came our way; and, amid the stuff we saw drifting past us, was the half of the brig's roundhouse. Now we had left our hiding-place on the brow of the rocks, when this wreckage had begun to float by, thinking we might do better elsewhere. Mary Vane knowing the way, as I did not, she having roamed about these rocks from childhood, we went down by a narrow gap in the cliffs, some way to the eastward, and got near to the water where it surged into a ravine.

When this piece of the roundhouse came tossing off the entrance where we were waiting, there was no sound of life coming in from it; and I had paid no heed to it, but for Mary Vane. She, being gifted of sight, I think, beyond me, did espy a man lying prone upon the house. She vowed, moreover, that he was living, for she had seen him move.

At this, we made our way along the dangerous edge of the rocks, so that presently, the wreckage drifting in closer, the man was plainly to be seen. Then we hallooed, and called out to him that we would give him aid. But, strangely enough, this man would make no response,

lying like one dead, or deaf and mute; and we knew not what to think of it.

However, we waited until, the stuff coming in still closer, it was almost near enough for the man to leap to a footing on the rocks. Then, suddenly, in a way that frightened us not a little, from the seeming madness of it, he got to his feet, and cursed us most frightfully. Also, he cried out for us to keep away and not come near to him; for he was one Will Endicott, he said, and as strong as any three cowardly wreckers or pirates; and no man should stave his head in, even though he were half-dead of drowning and nearly frozen.

So we saw he knew the inwardness of the thing, and, seeing he had fallen among wreckers, took us for them, also, and had kept still up to this time, hoping we might not see him.

We cried out again that we were not wreckers, but wished to help him get to shore; but he only cursed us the more, like a man in a frenzy, and we could give him no aid.

Presently, however, he gathered himself and made a mighty leap for the rocks, and landed on the slippery sides, where he got a hand clenched in a bit of them and held on.

Then, when he had dragged himself up to a good footing, and stood at full length for a moment, I saw that his boast was most likely to be the plain truth; for he was a giant of a man.

Now he drew a great sheath-knife from his belt and started toward us; and it was well for us he must climb

cautiously along the rocks, and could not come on with a rush, else I might not be here to-day to write of him. As it was, when he had advanced near to us, and we calling out all the while that we were not of the wreckers, and only meant him well, he paused and leaned against the wall of the ravine.

“Hulloa!” he cried, “’tis a woman, too, eh? Well, it may be even as you say. But keep back, for all that, till I do get firm footing on shore; and I care not, then, if you be wreckers or not.”

So we went back, as he came on, till we had got up, even, to the top of the ravine; and, in another moment, came forth Will Endicott, also, on to sure footing, out of the wrath and turmoil of the sea, and stood before us.

CHAPTER XVI

WRECKAGE CAST UP ASHORE

WILL ENDICOTT, I have taken to be, in these many years gone by, the handsomest fellow, made in God's image, that it has been my fortune to look upon. This year of the shipwreck, he was about five and thirty years of age, and in the full tide of manhood; of six feet, four, stature, and of a proportionate breadth and girth, even as a man of ancient modelling in marble.

With this, and without a mark of grossness, he was thewed like a gladiator in body and limb, but of finely knotted sinew; and withal, he was a man of much refinement, having been to school in England.

But now, in the dark hour of the morning, as he came out of the wreckage, with locks all matted and hanging about his eyes,—for his hair had grown long on ship-board,—and having a cut above one eye, that trickled the blood, and his clothing torn and hanging upon him wretchedly, he was by reason of it all a most dreadful sight. Also, as he bared a great, sinewy arm, with a knife clenched in the hand, we were, indeed, vastly more afraid of him than he of whatever fate might summon against him.

However, I went up to him, and showed him that I had

no musket nor pistol about me, nor any sort of weapon, save my knife, which would count for nothing against him. I put him in the way, quickly, then, with as few words as would suffice, of knowing who I was, and why I was there, and what he might expect from the men. Will Endicott seemed, with this, to put more confidence in us; and he asked us straightway which direction he should turn to hide and find shelter against the pirates.

Even at this moment we heard, a little way from us, the sound of men running up, and voices calling out; and one of them, whom I took to be Will Lewis, crying that he had seen the man drift this way, by the point. By which it was plain that it was Will Endicott they were seeking.

We had barely time to run into a little clump of low trees, and crouch there, before five men rushed out of the fog and stood at the edge of the ravine. There were four of Vane's men, besides the mate, Lewis; and 'tis of no great matter whichever they were, since all the men were in the cruel business; only, I may say, I saw not Elias among these, he being with Captain Vane on the other slope of the cliff.

These five men were armed with pistols, and cutlasses by their sides, and had each a heavy stick, or club, with a hook at the end, to reach for wreckage with, or for whatever purpose they saw fit. They stood for a moment, all of them, and spoke quick and sharp, and pointed down to the water swerving below them. And of all wickedness, and the lapse of men into bestiality, these, the words of their lips, were the most shocking I had ever heard; for

it was no more nor less than that here was a man that was likely, perchance, to come in upon the shore alive, which was a thing not to be suffered, since they were of a mind that there should be no one left after this night, to tell of it.

I did hear Will Endicott grind his teeth, for the fury of listening to men conniving at killing him; and he rose up once or twice, with the knife in his hand, and peered out at them. So that I did look to see him make a sudden rush and fall upon them. But they went, all at once, down the face of the ravine, close by the water's edge, and were lost to our sight.

Then I saw that this was the door of opportunity left ajar for us. So I called softly to Will Endicott that he should follow; and Mary Vane and I went on, hand in hand, ahead of him.

When we had come, at length, to the way of parting for her and me, it seemed as though I could let her go no more up to that abode of wicked men, but would fain keep her with me; yet did I know it were not possible to do this, but that we must wait and bide our time. So we were forced to go our own ways for the night, grieving and yet joyful.

I saw no other way — and, indeed, there was not any — than to have Will Endicott go with me to our cabin, and take up his abode with Tom and Elbridge and me, though I saw it were a thing of some menace to us, to harbour a man from the wreck. So I bade Will Endicott follow, and I would give him shelter.

The time would be, I judged, about four of the morning,

that is, when we had got to the door of our cabin and had entered therein. And, knowing Will Endicott to be half-frozen, and drenched, and hollow in his stomach, I bestirred myself to get for him a dram of rum; and I raked over the coals and ashes and got for him also a piece of smoked fish, and hung it where it broiled, with a sweet odour, before the blaze. Moreover, I loaned him Tom Appleton's pipe, and we both sat us down to smoke.

In a little while, with the blaze, or the sound of our voices, though we spoke softly, or the smell of food, which he was a man ever keen for, good Tom Appleton came awake and espied us. Also, at his exclamation, rose up Elbridge Carver; and the two sat staring at us and rubbing the witch-dust from their eyes.

Then Will Endicott, seeing them sitting up stark amazed, with their eyes bulging like fish that be drawn out ashore with hooks, and he being much himself again, with the warming of good liquor and fire and the comfort of tobacco, did laugh heartily; which was the ordinary manner of him, he being by nature a merry man, and not bloody-minded.

“By the Lord! I am no ghost, nor fish, nor fowl, nor witch-man,” cried Will Endicott, and Tom Appleton and Elbridge Carver were on their feet at the full, strong sound of his voice. “I be a man of blood and bone, such as you,” continued Will Endicott; “and come ashore in a wild sea whiles you were sleeping here like good men of clear conscience. And, praise God! I have drunk your liquor and had the warmth of your fire, when I had thought to have made good feeding for the fish of the sea. Now

here I am, Will Endicott, of London, and ready to thank you for shelter and refuge from cutthroats; which indebtedness I owe first to your good comrade here, and to a slip of a woman whose name I know not."

Now at this mention of Mary Vane, Tom Appleton and Elbridge did look at me shrewdly, seeing of a sudden that more than one strange thing had come to pass while they had slept; and they having had, I think, in these latterdays, some insight as to my intentions more than I had conveyed to them by word. So I made haste, being not of a mind for further disclosures at present, to acquaint them of Will Endicott and of his coming ashore.

This being told, Will Endicott got warm welcome; indeed, he and Tom Appleton had much in common, being both men of the old country.

But both Tom Appleton and Elbridge would have it — and were in the right from their way of looking at it — that I should have come back for them, that they might see these things and, perchance, have done something toward the saving of life from the wreck. I knew not just what answer to make, unless it were to tell them the very reason why I had not returned for them, which was of the time I had been with Mary Vane. And that was too near my heart to fashion in speech for any man to hear.

But big Will Endicott laughed again at my embarrassment, and said I had all the help a man needed at any time; which was a pair of bright eyes and the soft voice of a pretty woman.

This threw me into not a little confusion; and I was

angry, too. For a man in love is jealous of small things that have no meaning of wrong in them; and, moreover, I had thought to get over this much of the night's adventure with no more said. And here were Tom and Elbridge smiling, knowingly, and I thought I should hear Tom Appleton, presently, declare he had been a young man once, himself, and have them all girding at me.

So I answered perhaps more sharply than there was need of, mindful of the innocence of my Mary, and said I had come upon her by sheer accident, and no prearrangement; and that we had gone together along the shore of a common errand, to save whom we might. Nor would I listen to aught that should cast aspersion on her in any way (which was not intended by Will Endicott), but I would resent it from friend or stranger.

So, Will Endicott, seeing this last was meant for him, and he having no malice in him, and realizing, too late, that he had muddled things, sought quickly to make amends by bearing out what I had said, so far as he knew; and Tom and Elbridge said no more.

However, in a day or two, I did disclose enough to good Tom Appleton to put him right, and have him see the real situation; which set him whistling hard, realizing, as he did, how this new condition did add to the complications of our plight, and make the problem of our escape harder to solve.

But, at the present moment, we set about to make Will Endicott at ease and comfortable; though we were at a loss to provide for him suitable garments to displace his torn ones, he being too big for anything of ours to fit him;

so that for the time being he must needs make his own do as best he could. However, we fed him, which was a thing of no small accomplishment, and he laid him down by the fire and fell asleep from exhaustion; and one might hear him above the clamour of the sea.

Then, at about nine of the morning, we were for going together down to the shore, Tom and Elbridge and I, to see what had been cast in from the wreck, and what the men of the stockade would be doing; but we knew not what to do with big Will Endicott. So Tom Appleton would stay and keep him company, and Elbridge and I should go on together and see how the wind blew, as we say of things uncertain.

We went down together, then, presently, Elbridge and I, and came to the shore of the reach. There were Captain Vane and four men, working to haul out a huge hogshead upon the beach, they having passed the bight of a hawser about it when it was afloat. All about upon the shore, far away along to the rise of the cliffs, was here and there a cask or a rundlet or a bale of stuff, besides some broken pieces of the brig that had drifted around and stranded with the first of the ebb.

Captain Vane and his men were glad to have us take hold along with them and heave; and the six of us, with all our strength, fetched the hogshead up from the wash of the tide.

Then did Captain John Vane lean himself against the chines of it, and gaze out across the waters that came running in upon Round House; and the satisfaction in his face was for any man to see. Yet he was pleased to dis-

semble, as he turned toward us, it being the nature of the man to be cunning.

“ ‘Twas a good, brave ship,” he said; “ and a stout crew, no doubt; and a bad thing to fetch in here, miles out of her course. But a compass be no guide to men as have the drink aboard.”

“ When came it in? And did any one see it strike?” I asked.

“ Of that you know the same as we,” answered Captain Vane — and indeed spoke more truly than he knew. “ But ‘twas twixt dark and daylight; and all alone she were, and never a hand near to help. Aye, and she must have broken up fast; for when George Watkins had come down at daybreak there was the stuff coming in, and drifting off and on all about, and never the shape of the hull left anywhere, to show whereof she was.”

“ Aye, man,” he continued, “ and all the quick aboard her gone adrift dead in the sea. God’s mercy! ‘Twould be a sharp death, and the tide running over them head and heels now to the end, every man of them.”

And, before God, Captain John Vane spoke as though he was sorry for them.

“ All save one,” said I.

“ Save one!” cried Captain Vane, springing up and putting his hand, by habit, to his belt, “ Save one!”

“ Aye, sir, save one,” said I. “ He came up through the fog this morn, afore sun-up, to our cabin.”

“ And where be he now, man?” asked Captain Vane, smiling like a gray wolf.

“ He be one of us, sir,” I replied, making bold

of it; “and will abide along of us, lacking a better place.”

I did never behold a man so fiercely torn by passion and striving to give no expression to it, as was Captain John Vane; for the news came upon him sharp, like an arrow from a thicket.

“Here, you, Will Lewis!” he cried out; and the mate’s gaunt, tall form rose from the rocks by the shore, away to the mouth of the reach. Presently he came loping up, with his red eyes redder still, and rheumy with the sharp cutting of the spray, and dull, lacking sleep.

“Mark you what the youth here says, Will,” cried Captain Vane, “and see if you were true-spoken when you did swear you and George Watkins searched the shore and all about, wide from east to west, this morning, and found no one to save. For here is news of one come safe to land, as this man speaks the truth.”

At this Will Lewis started like a man sore hit; and knew not what to say of it, and stood gaping; but his eyes blazed like a hound’s.

“And who be this man, captain or seaman, or what, and what says he of the wreck, and of how they left their course?” asked Captain Vane, turning again to me.

“Why, he be one Will Endicott by name,” I answered; “and a London man, and no sailor. He came, I think, for the passage, though I have not all the facts from him yet. As to the working of the brig, he knows nothing of that, he having been fast asleep in the cabin and thrown out, half-stunned, by the shock of the brig’s striking; and not

long after, finding himself in the sea and clinging to a piece of the roundhouse."

"And where came he in?" asked Will Lewis.

"That he knows not, himself," I answered, "it being all wild shore to him; but he says 'twas in a sort of rift of the ledge, which I would take to be the deep ravine to the eastward of the great headland."

I said this — which was true — only to see what Will Lewis would make of it, knowing he had been sent there by Captain Vane to cut Will Endicott off. He was hard set by it, too, from the looks between him and Captain Vane. But as for the rest that I said, as to Will Endicott being asleep when the brig struck, it was, I fear, wide of the truth — though I had not heard the story yet — but I would have no more hatred linger against him in the minds of these men that had sought his life than I could help.

"Well, 'tis one and no more," said Will Lewis to Captain Vane.

"Aye, only one," said Captain Vane, and said something else I did not hear. Then they fell to work once more drawing the floating stuff ashore, there being shortly some seven or eight of the men at it.

So, having found out the way things were working, and knowing they might have been worse, since the bringing in by the sea of this good store of stuff would divert attention for the time from Will Endicott, we went back once more toward our cabin. Then, when we had come near to it, I was pleased to send Elbridge in alone and go on up the little stream, at a brave pace for any man to follow; for

I had the best of reasons to think I should find my Mary there in the bower over-canopied with the wild grape, by the shore of the floss, where I had once surprised her, weeping, but many and oft, since that, smiling and eager to welcome me.

Nor was I disappointed; for she had been there a half-hour already, and vowing, prettily, that it had been four times as long as that, at least. And I had rather Mary Vane should make a pretence of finding fault with me than that any other woman in all the world should try to flatter, I knowing now of a ready way to please her and put a stop to conversation at one and the same time; so there could not be so much as lovers' quarrelling between us.

She was pale and worn, however, with the terrors and anxiety of the night before, and yearning to see me and to be comforted by some one that loved her as I did. And I would ever be thorough and patient and do my full duty in a matter of this kind, and spare no time, however valuable, to accomplish it. So, by the time I had done my best to put her in a braver humour over our affairs, and we had talked over what it were best for us to do; and how we should wait; and how and when we should meet; and a world of other matters now near and dear to us, why, the sun was at the point of noon; and I wondered all at once what Tom and Elbridge would be thinking, and whether they would fear for me — which they were not doing, being shrewd to surmise what I would be about.

Then, when I had gone on with Mary Vane in the familiar path, and had parted from her at the stockade, there were Captain Vane and his men coming up from shore;

and so I got back to my comrades in a hurry, knowing I had been gone long enough.

That afternoon, as there was still a great drift of stuff all along the reach, and being in need of whatsoever we could save of it, we did all four set out and go down to the shore; and Ezra Bradford and his boy went with us, so we were a strong party, Will Endicott being as good as two or three men.

In the end, with what Captain Vane's men gathered, and what we, ourselves, saved, there was good picking of food and clothing and liquors; for, though the sea and rocks ground the greater part of the brig and its cargo fine, yet, by reason of their shape, offering less resistance, and being made very strong, were many of the hogsheads and a greater number of smaller barrels and casks preserved and tossed ashore so we could get them; and this stuff did accrue to the benefit of us all in common — though we four would gladly have gone without our share than to have had it by foul means.

CHAPTER XVII

ELIAS AND I DO BATTLE

Now, while we were making this replevin on the sea for the goods and chattels cruelly seized by it, we were coming to know Will Endicott better, and liking him the more we knew him.

By his story, he was of good family, formerly of the west of England, but latterly of London. He had gone over to France on a secret errand; and thence, by extension of it, to the island of Martinique, in the brig, the *Colon*, and was bound, in the same vessel, to Quebec. He had had, moreover, a capital of some three hundred pounds in the keeping of the *Colon's* captain, and this was lost with the brig.

As for my account to Captain Vane of Will Endicott's conduct on the night of the wreck, it was not wholly at variance with the facts; since Will Endicott had, indeed, been sound asleep till near the time of the brig's striking. But it seems he had been awakened by the noise aboard, and had partially dressed and run out on deck in time to see the fires flaring red through the fog, and to hear the captain and the mates cry, all too late, that they had been tricked and led in to destruction.

So he was knowing, when tossed in ashore, of the devil-

try of the thing, and was alert against capture by the wreckers.

It turned out, however, that I had put the matter most convincingly before Captain Vane and Will Lewis; and so, Will Endicott having escaped them, they could see nothing to their purpose in doing away with him, nor cared, when it was all over, if he knew of their wickedness or not. So it came about that any enmity they had against him, because he had been too clever for them, went gradually by default.

We thought now once more, after a time, of the project of seizing the brig and making off with her; but Vane's men put a sudden stop to this conniving on our part by running her into the northern end of the reach and stripping her of her sails. So we could but acquiesce with fate, and make ready for the winter, now hard upon us — the second and last we should spend upon this island — and thank God we were no worse off.

As for me, the island was no more desolate and a place of dead hopes; but the very air of it was now sweeter to breathe, and the bright stars overhead were no longer cold and distant, but near above me, and friendly, shining down on Mary Vane and me.

The winter came in upon us quickly, for there fell a black frost that shut the ground up, so that it softened not again till spring. Now, when the days were short, and the afternoons blended fast into twilight, and we had the long nights before us to pass by candle-light, why, right glad we were to have so good a man as Will Endicott abide with us. For Will Endicott had many ideas, and a knowl-

edge of the world, to enliven dull men with; but mostly, having been a man preëminent in feats of strength at his schools, was he fond of games and sports. So he set about evenings to teach us a thing he called “boxing.”

And first, that he might not do us injury in these encounters, he fashioned two uncouth pairs of huge mittens out of some cloth, stuffing them with the soft tips of the spruce boughs, so that when one received a smart rap over the nose with one of these, there was at least the consolation of a pleasing odour about it.

Now I had done my share of pummelling with other boys about town, but this skill of Will Endicott's was a thing new to me — in practice, at least, though most men have some rudiments of it. For big Will Endicott would stand, with one of us for opponent, and invite a blow, which he would beg him to deliver hard and, maybe, full at his face; and it seemed an unfair thing, and unkind to do, even by invitation. But when, at length, one of us came to deliver the blow, lo! there was no hitting the man. For up would come one of his great arms and the blow would glance off harmless.

Now, when he had taught us the trick of this, which be a guarding with the arms as a man guards his head and body at single-stick, then Will Endicott took us a step further.

This I do relate, not because of its being an accomplishment acquired by me to be boasted of, but because of the use I put it to, later, as you shall see. It seemed, that but to ward away a blow were not the extent of this cleverness; but both to interpose an arm against the blow and

assume a ready attitude and posture for returning a counter-blow, at one and the same time.

Which, not to weary you, this Will Endicott was most artful at; he being a man of coolness, and very quick, despite his size; and he taught us so well a great variety of feints and blows and counter-blows, as well as ways of ducking and shifting the head, and how to keep lightly and yet firmly on the feet — and, in short, the whole art of defence and attack — that it was at length a great pleasure to him to take us, one by one, of an evening, and batter us till we had all cried mercy, and he the only one of us to finish fresh and hungry for more.

So the days went by, and the grip of winter was cold and fixed upon us, and the shroud of snow covering the dead earth. And all this time there had been but love, unbroken, betwixt my Mary and me; for there was, indeed, no foolish petulance about her, but clear, honest good sense and a way of looking at things fairly. Nor was an incident, that I now recall, of any magnitude, to be called a quarrel, but there was — to be truthful — for a brief hour or two (it seemed longer) a misunderstanding between us, which there would be no call to relate, but that it was a strange and curious thing, and the ending of it was sweet and not bitter.

It happened one day, when we had wandered into the wood, up the course of the floss, I had sought to know what she might remember of herself in the years gone by. And she, in sooth, had been all her life, for aught she knew, a little island maid among these strange men. For the first she remembered, she was playing about the hill

by the stockade; and that was half a score and more years past.

This Captain John Vane, whom she called uncle, and the other men, had come and gone upon the sea often, and left her there, with the women and a few men on guard; but she had never been away from this island. Yet she was not wanting in some small knowledge of the world, having been taught by the Cuban girl, the wife of Robert Mackay. This woman had, indeed, taught her so she could read and write in both Spanish and our own good English — which, please God! I take to be the best tongue ever spoken.

Now, when I had told my own story — but saying nothing about my adventure with Captain Teach — I came to tell of the pirate's paper that I carried with me, and how in its meaning lay the secret of hidden treasure, which, if ever I did chance to find it, would be ours. So to show the mystic writing to Mary Vane, I took off the golden locket that hung by the chain about my neck, and opened it.

But, at this, as the sweet face looked out upon us, with the eyes that had so moved me from the first, shining clear and steadfast, Mary Vane started back, with wonder and surprise.

“Why! what be this?” cried she. “You wear another woman's face near to your heart? Pray, who may she be?”

Nor was this any way strange, nor for me to take offence at; for, having claim upon me now above all others in the world, she had, indeed, a right to know. Yet, for the

moment, I did feel a foolish pique, that she who loved me should feel the faintest shadow of doubt, for even one brief moment of surprise.

“In truth, I do not know, myself,” I answered, abruptly. “Nor do I care, nor need you. For ‘twas but a pirate’s gift, a trinket, along with a fine gold watch and chain, for a service done, away in the great Massachusetts Bay; and I will one day tell you of it.”

“But will you wear it now?” asked she; and there was a quaver in her voice.

“Indeed, why not?” asked I.

“Why, for no reason at all,” said she. “Indeed, I care not.”

But she said it sadly, and so was I vexed, in a silly, stupid manner, that she should take it amiss. And I could not find words to tell to Mary Vane how I often saw her own face in this same locket, lest she understand not and think I did but trifle with her.

So it went that way for the time being; but she cared no more to listen concerning the paper enclosed therein; and there was, for a day, a shadow come into our clear sky. But later, when I had thought more soberly upon the matter, I took her way of seeing it, and so made haste to ask her forgiveness; and I told her the story of the locket, complete, from beginning to end. Whereat she was only pleased, and not jealous, of my fancy, and sorry she had vexed me, which made me ashamed of my stubbornness.

Also, when I took the locket off and said I would wear it no more, she put the chain about my neck again with her own hands, and vowed she would be ever grateful to

the sweet lady therein, who had brought her better fortune than she had to me; and so the matter ended, with the chain and its locket — and my Mary's arms — about my neck.

But she bade me think no more of the hidden treasure; and, indeed, I cared nothing for it now, having a treasure close at hand, that naught, even death, should rob me of henceforth. However, I did not cast the paper away, else I might have had to retrace it again from memory, as Ephraim had done.

This, by my remembrance, was some time in the mid-winter, when the day of Christmas had come and gone; which latter day is of no account to be set down to more than mere mention; since it were a day of small satisfaction to us.

Then, when we would be getting down to the dregs of our winter, toward late February, I was more strongly moved than I had ever been to take up my abode at the stockade; for there came to me Mary Vane, much troubled, to tell me, with hesitancy and reluctance, that she were annoyed and offended, and even in some fear, at the conduct of Elias.

It seemed he had not dared to ask what I had, being repulsed by her beyond the opportunity; but he would persist in attentions clearly distasteful and unfavoured; and he was, moreover, in high favour with Captain Vane, and growing more so day by day. He had become emboldened toward her by this strong alliance, and Captain Vane had hinted to her what Elias dared not say for himself; and vowed she were come of an age when it were

well to marry, and better for her, being cast among so many rough men, to have a husband to protect her.

This, throwing me into a fever of anger and anxiety, drove me to reckoning what was to be done, with little delay; and, being alone of an afternoon with Tom Appleton, I set the matter before him for advice. He, not being devious in his way of doing things, put it bluntly and sharply; which was what I needed.

“ Philip,” cried Tom Appleton to me, after a moment or two of reflection, “ if 'twas I, and I wanted the girl, I should go and get her.”

“ Aye, but what of Captain Vane?” I asked.

“ Ask him square for her,” said he. “ Demand her! Speak up, man. A hand on your knife rather than on your cap. 'Tis the sort he likes.”

Good Tom Appleton was on his feet by this time, and pacing the cabin floor; and, had he wanted Mary Vane for his own, he could not have been more excited.

“ I think you're right,” said I — and so I went the next day. For I could hold back no longer.

It was about mid-afternoon, then, of a February day, that I went up the hill to the stockade; and I remember well how the frosty ground crunched under my feet, and how my pulse was throbbing and my brain hot; and it seemed as though dear life or death were in the conclusion of my quest.

Then, as I came up by the great gate, there strolled lazily out of it Elias, looking sleek and well satisfied with the world, and smoking a long pipe.

It was the first I had met him alone face to face since the day he left our cabin; and I minded me of the old days and old companionship, and put out a hand.

“ Hulloa, Elias ! ” I said. “ You be much of a stranger nowadays; and my ! but you be broader in the face by many good meals than in the days we sailed to Eastham.”

But I cut myself short; for Elias took not even his pipe from his mouth, nor thought of giving a hand to meet mine; and he strolled away, leaving me standing foolishly, and sorry, too, withal.

However, I lost no heart by this encounter, but rather gained by it; and I went in quickly through the gate and into the great room where sat Captain Vane, with two of the men by him at a table, the two throwing at dice and he looking on.

“ Sit down, lad ! ” cried he, “ and see George Rawlins roll up a score against George Watkins, to be paid next voyage; an he do not win, then he is a dog; for I, myself, bet on him.”

“ Thank you, and I’ll stand, please you,” I answered; for I could not sit still, for impatience. “ I will beg a word with you when you can spare the time, and it be only for you to hear.”

“ What ! a mystery, eh ? ” cried he. “ Well, these be queer times when Jack Vane serves as Father Confessor for youths. Get out, you dicers, and come back later; but mind, I do not bet until I see the dice thrown with my own eyes.”

So the two men went out, grumbling at my interruption.

"Now, what be it, lad?" asked Captain Vane. "Do you run short of liquor or tobacco down at your monastery? Does the big man eat and drink you out?"

But I think he did banter me, being shrewd, and having an inkling of what I would say.

"No, sir," I answered. "'Tis more than that, and less easy to declare. For 'tis Mary Vane, your niece, Mary, that I do want, and came to ask for—and no man can love her more than I—and she, herself—"

"Hold hard, lad!" interrupted Captain Vane, leering coarsely. "There be already one stout youth ahead of you, and I know not how many more to come. What say you, shall I put the girl up at lottery for you all to cast the dice for?"

"Not while I do live to prevent," I cried, while my cheeks burned hot. "The first to throw shall die, though I be the next to follow."

"So! ho! not so hot-breathed, man," exclaimed Captain Vane, the veins standing out in his neck and upon his forehead. "Pray, who gives you warrant to say what shall be done and not done with my Mary? Is the girl not mine to dispose of? Who gives you leave to speak?"

"She, herself, sir," said I, boldly; "and that same she has given, and will give, to none other."

Captain Vane drew in a great breath and whistled it out sharply.

"The devil!" said he. "'Tis a new face on the matter; for I do grant, the girl may have a word to say about it. But, for all of that, I be for fair play and no favour; and, having as good as given my word to the youth that has

but just gone, how shall I give the same to another in the next breath?"

He sat, thinking, thrusting his hands into his belt and whistling softly.

"I have it!" he cried at last, sitting upright and slapping the table till the pewter cups on it jingled. And he roared like a man that hath a mirthful inspiration. "I do mind," he said, "how Ed Grace and long Nat Hawtrey fought for a whole hour by the glass as we lay for two days and a night off the Blind Sisters; and an ugly fight it was, for a little Spanish girl, the like of whom one may have in Havana for the wearing of a new doublet, and a few doubloons, to buy her trinkets. But she had a pretty face. So brave Nat Hawtrey went over the rail in the end, with two knife-cuts in the breast, and an able lad he was, and I had rather lost Ed Grace — aye, and Will Cole, too — than him.

"And yet," he added, "I be short-handed now, and could ill spare this young man —"

"Elias?" I interrupted.

"You speak it right," said he. "No other. And it shall be north-country style, with bare fists, no bones broken nor cutting of throats. What say you, will you fight for her, or will you yield, and save your head — for Elias be of bigger body than you and I think will show up well in a quarrel."

"I will fight," I answered. "Shall I have Tom Ap-
leton up to second me?"

"That you shall not," replied Captain Vane, "for I will do whatever of that be needed, for you and the other youth,

too. But Will Lewis shall come in, also, to see fair play; and, in truth, 'twill please him prettily, since a good fight we have not seen, save one, since the day Will Cole's men went away."

Thus Captain Vane spake with huge satisfaction, as a man about to sit down to a good dinner.

"When will you fight?" asked he.

"In a quarter of an hour," I answered, "and no sooner."

Now that was because I felt my heart go hard against my ribs; though not from fear, but because it came over me, as though I were bathed in fire, how much there was at stake for me in this fight. Moreover, there had leaped again into life the spirit of the pirate's paper; for Captain Vane had named a place, not mythical then, but of stone and soil, a place hunted in vain through so many tiring days and months, the "Blind Sisters."

The words sung in my brain till I felt myself reel; and I longed for good Tom Appleton or stout Will Endicott to stand at my back and give me counsel before I began.

But soon I felt this uncertainty, born of surprise and sudden shock, passing away; and, in its stead, a great eagerness seized upon me for the combat to begin. So that my whole frame quivered and shook with the yearning of the blood for action.

Nor was I kept much longer in suspense; for the door swung open and there strode in Elias, with rank contempt in his scowl and a sneer for me, as on the day when he laid me on my back at the launching of the *Venture*. I thought he had that day, too, in mind; for he looked

toward me once before we had begun, and said, smiling cruelly: "So, then, you come back for more, do you? Well, I swear it has taken you many years to get your courage; and we may be better at it quickly, lest it shall leave you; for, I mistake not, if you be shaking already."

"It has been too long, I say, indeed," I answered. "I trust you may find me a better man now than then."

"A better fool!" cried he, with a sudden burst of passion. We said no more.

Now, as we stood up together, once again, with our jackets and doublets off, we were not so illy matched as in the days long past; for, whereas Elias had grown in bulk and was the heavier, this would be in part from gross feeding and drinking; and big Will Endicott would have said he were not wholly fit.

Now I saw here, too, how a thing got by chance and thought lightly of may come to stand a man in stead, when nothing else but that will suffice to bring him to the goal of his desires. So I did feel grateful in heart for those idle buffetings with big Will; and I minded me of his teaching; and, first of all, not to be too hot-headed in the beginning of an encounter, but to measure an adversary's arm and strength, even as a fencer gauges another's sword and sword-arm; and, above all, to stand up at the outset like a man that has his battle already won, and no misgiving in his eyes to cheer his foe.

Then, as we stepped forth to fall to, I saw as in a troubled dream the evil face of Will Lewis, leering horribly; and, likewise, Captain John Vane grinning like a red fox, and rubbing his hands, to see so fine a show.

The next moment, Elias came at me with a fierce rush, and made a sudden feint as though to batter me about the ribs; but he swung, instead, a blow that would have left me no teeth to hold a pipe with; he thinking, at the outset, to show me some of his man-o'-war tricks and have me whipped out of hand.

But this onrush was only a measure that Will Endicott had taught us early not to be afeared of, it being but a show of savageness, to frighten novices, and also be good for a heavy man to employ against a lighter. So it moved me not, only to meet it with quick stepping aside, and yet with a firm footing of the legs, to withstand so much of it as need be, together with the blocking of the arms in the right place, and not according to the pretence of the blow.

This, I saw, came in a measure of shock to Elias, who had thought to have me by the heels at once; for he perceived I had some knowledge of the art and would not fight as a man may shoot with a blunderbuss, at random, and trusting to some one of many chance bullets to find a mark.

“Aha! I like that,” he cried. “The more skill, the more credit, we used to say.”

But I thought he liked it not.

Indeed, his temper, which was, at the best, unruly, did get the better of him, so that he came on again in the manner as before, and trusting to his weight to overwhelm me. Then I thought of a saying of Will Endicott’s, that a man’s skull will stand more sorrow than his heart, and I took two smart blows there, to give Elias the like about the body. Then were we quickly in the thick of fighting,

and giving and taking blows so fast there was no reckoning of them.

John Vane and Will Lewis were cheering us on, being pleasingly entertained thereat, and having now and then to scramble back out of our way; for we were here and there and all about the room, with faces raw and red, and our shirts hanging torn about us, and we panting like hounds after the fox. But, in all, was I mindful to beat Elias about the body and leave him to find his account in blows that hurt and stung, but took not so much strength from me.

Presently he stood off for a moment, to get his wind; and I would not force the fighting yet, seeing that I would last the longer, anyway.

We were at it once again, however, and Elias trying to be more cautious, seeing that the game was not his for the mere asking. But he could no more battle that way than a bull may stand still at a red cloth. Moreover, now that they had seen Elias had met his match, were Will Lewis and Captain Vane in high feather; and they fell presently to taunting Elias and goading him on, though they cared no more which of us should win than which way the wind would blow on the morrow. So, at their jibes, Elias flamed into a great fury and lost some of his caution; and I did perceive an advantage and brought him to his knees with a blow that sent the breath gasping from his throat.

For me, now, there was no more uncertainty, but an assurance that I should not be beaten, feeling that all I held dear in life lay in the punishing of him. And although the two pirate men were yelling, from the sheer

delight of seeing the bigger man vanquished, and crying out for me to follow up the blow, I would not, but waited for Elias to recover and regain his feet.

He was blind with rage, when he had waited, and came on again wildly, like a ship with the helmsman gone overboard; and the blows I gave him stung him to madness; so that, ere the two that watched us could prevent, he had snatched down a great knife that lay in a rack on the wall and struck with that; and the flesh of my shoulder felt as though a hot iron had seared it, and the blood stained the woollen of my shirt.

But this blow, foul and cowardly, was his last; for, even as it went home and I knew the sting of the white steel, and before Will Lewis and Captain Vane could come between us, I had caught him with a swift upward blow that Will Endicott might have been proud of; and Elias's head went back with the shock of it, and he was lying, white and senseless, on the cabin floor, with Will Lewis throwing water in his face and cursing him for his treachery.

Then there came to me suddenly, as I stood quivering from the exultation of the ordeal over and the fight won, a sudden subtle realization that there was something gone from me; a sense of something, long familiar, missing. The next moment, it came to me that the chain hung about my neck by Mary Vane had been torn away, and I felt its touch no longer. So I stooped and looked about me, to see where it might have fallen on the floor.

But at this, I beheld a strange thing, that blotted out all in an instant the thought of the fight, or of my wound —

which was but a superficial cut and soon to be healed — and of aught else. For there sat Captain Vane, with his eyes fixed on the table, staring stupidly, and glaring like a man whose brains have been witch-eaten, as we say, in his sleep.

There, before him, as I looked, I saw the locket, opened, and the paper it had contained spread out before him.

“Ah! you have it,” I cried, joyfully, and sprang to the table beside him.

“Have it!” he shouted, hoarsely. “What deviltry is this? How came you, lad, by these? Here! Here!” And he held up the locket, with fingers that trembled.

“Do you know who that is?” he cried. “That face? Why, I have seen that before. How came it here? Man! It is the girl’s mother — she died at sea —

“And that — and that!” He reeled back in his chair like a man in a fit. “That,” he cried, again, choking, and pointing, sore bewildered, at the paper, “’tis Jack Brandt’s own fist. Why, there’s his mark at the finish. By God! I’ve seen him make it aboard the ship. What deviltry be this? Curse the man! Isn’t he dead? Isn’t he dead? Didn’t they hang him years ago in Boston? Will he be alive again?”

CHAPTER XVIII

DAN - O' - THE - SHIP'S STORY

I WOULD not venture to say which of us was the more taken aback by this disclosure, Captain Vane or I; he, at the sight of the paper, in chief; and I, to hear that this sweet face which I had worn so long in the locket about my neck was none other than the own mother of Mary Vane — which I could scarce credit, and yet, in the same mind, knew must be true; and was an accounting for the strange transformation of the face, in my fancy, into that of my Mary.

So I thought me, too, how tender and gentle an ending this would prove to our misunderstanding over the locket; and I was longing to find my Mary and tell her of the discovery; and, again, was I burning to hear more from Captain Vane, and how it came about that he should know concerning a trinket that the pirate, Teach, had given to me.

But it was not suffered me to choose concerning what I should do, whether to go or stay; for now, as the early dusk was coming on, there was I, perforce, seated beside Captain Vane; and Elias dragged away by the two that had come back to resume their gaming. There, also, was the Cuban coming in with two great dips alight and setting them down on the table before us; and Captain Vane

gripping me hard, as though he feared I should get away; and Will Lewis, blinking, with red eyes, to discover what it all meant.

"Is he dead — the man who wrote that?" asked Captain Vane once more, calmer, but with a clutch still upon my arm.

"He is dead," I answered; "dead these fourteen years."

"How do you know that?" demanded Captain Vane, eagerly.

"Because I saw him die," said I.

"Stand by! Will Lewis," cried Captain Vane, springing from his seat and clapping the other on the shoulder. "D'ye mind the figure there, Will? Have ye seen it made before?"

"Aye; 'tis the long fluke and the short fluke," said the other. "I knew but one man that did the like, and he climbed the tree with the dead limbs."

"Right and sure, Will!" bellowed Captain Vane. "'Twas Dandy Jack Brandt; and why he would draw the anchor like that, with one fluke long and one short, was what I could never understand. But he never did the thing different; and 'twas as good as a governor's seal. But he came to the withered tree, did Dandy Jack. Did he die white, or like a man, lad?"

"He went up straight and scornful to the gallows," I answered; "but I know no more than that, for I shut my eyes when the time came — and he left a curse for Dan-o'-the-Ship."

"What's that!" cried Captain Vane, leaping up like a

man stung, and his eyes glaring — and I was sorry I had said the thing; but the words came out before I thought. “Not a dying man’s curse?” cried Captain Vane, querulously. “Don’t say you heard it, man, and he on the gallows.”

And this, I record, be the first and only time I ever saw the look of fright in the eyes of Captain Vane.

“I heard him speak no word on the gallows,” I answered; and I was glad I could say it. “ ’Twas in the prison, when he gave the paper to me; and he did think you might know how to read it right, though it would puzzle even you; and then, of a sudden, he fell to cursing you, ‘Dan Baldrick,’ ‘Black Dan,’ ‘Dan-o’-the-Ship,’ all three he called you, and swore he would put a curse on you when he died.”

“But you heard him say it not when the time came,” interrupted Captain Vane — and his voice was almost whining. “The dog!” he burst out, all in a flame of fury. “They choked the words out of him, or you’d have heard them. No man can put the curse on me. You can’t. Say, can you?” And the sweat was dropping from the man’s face as he glared into mine.

“For certain, I cannot,” I replied.

“Then let me hear no more of that!” cried he.

With which he fell to studying the paper.

“Do you make it out?” I asked, after a time.

“I do and I don’t,” he replied. “There’s a running rhyme here that I get a little drift of, but only as you or any other man may; for ’tis clear we shall find somewhere a skeleton, set up as a mark to lay a course from; and I

do know naught of the real inwardness of it, having never heard the like to this day.

“But, as for the other course, we shall lay that like walking from the reach to the rocks; and, without a figure, I say it will take us off the Carolinas. I do have in mind the very island, for we were there twice in the year that Jack Brandt went forward and I aft; and I do know the way there, like a fish-hawk knows its tree.

“But what's in it, at the end?” he asked. “Did he speak of gold or silver, or treasure, hid away, or more concerning where it may be found, than this seaman's singsong?”

“I'll tell you the whole of it,” I replied; and so I recounted all I knew of the man that had died as John, or Peter, Roach, on the gallows by the shore of the Charles; and what he had said to me; and how he had acted. For it was a thing stamped on my brain for the whole of my life.

From that, I went on to the day and night I had passed with Teach aboard his vessel, and to tell how I had come by the locket.

Nor were ever spoken words more of meat and drink to any men than these of mine to Will Lewis and Captain John Vane; and I minded that once Will Lewis exclaimed to the other, “And Scudamore went up, too, along of Dandy Jack!” And they seemed to get much satisfaction from that.

When I had finished, Captain Vane and Will Lewis had brandy fetched in, to think on; and by this token, they

thought deeply; and Captain Vane was moved as I had never seen him.

" 'Tis treasure, lad, and worth the getting," he said, at length. " And 'tis yours by gift, and ours by showing the way; and so we share."

But I was for other things, for the moment.

" Will you tell me of the locket?" I asked.

" Why, that I be coming to," replied he; " and more, for your sake, lad;" and he smiled on me grimly. " It were a game fight you made against the hulking fellow, and did please me well. So you shall have the girl, and that, with a clean bill; for she comes no more of pirates than does the wood-pigeon from the nest of fish-hawks; and she bears my name but by adoption.

" Moreover, you and the other three shall join with us here, after all, and need not be squeamish therat; since we shall go not to take any ship, but to find this treasure which is ours for the taking. Nor do I think we, ourselves, shall go again, since there be more danger now in seizing a cargo of fish than there was once in taking a fleet."

Now the man spoke nearer to the truth than he knew, unmindful that even the great Teach swept the seas no more, but had a score and more of bullet-holes through his huge body in a bloody fight off Carolina, and would never again do blasphemy in the face of God's tempest.

" Listen," said Captain Vane to me. " There were honest Will Lewis here, and Will Cole and Ed Grace and Nat Hawtrey and Jack Harwood and I — good and decent lads — shipped aboard the sloop, *Walrus*, a big merchantman, out of Portland, England, in the fall of 1700.

We were all of Dorset, and went down together to find a berth.

“ Well, we were bound a long voyage to Ceylon ; and, by the time we had got to the Cape of Good Hope, we were, we thought, better friends than before ; and we swore to ship together again when the voyage should be over. However, the voyage was over before we had thought ; for, when we had run up the coast of Africa a ways, a great brigantine laid us aboard between Madagascar and the mainland.

“ Now, there was little fighting done on our side, and the most of that, it turned out, was by us five ; for we got into the carpenter’s galley and stood them off for a half a glass, with muskets and pistols ; but then, when we saw they had the sloop, there was no more for us to do than give up ; and every man of us looking up to the yard-arm to see where we should swing.

“ But it seems, the captain of the brigantine was wanting men ; and when it came to a choice, why he said the first five he took would be the men that had fought and not run. So he took us five, and as many more, out of the *Walrus* ; and several thousand pounds sterling in gold, and let the sloop go.

“ This pirate,” Captain Vane went on, “ was Jack Brandt,—‘ Dandy Jack,’ we called him, for he was such a vain man on sea or land as I never saw. His eyes went through a man like a flash of steel ; and he was taller than any of us, and no admiral ever looked gaudier.

“ I mind me to this day how he wore a scarlet coat, with pearl buttons, a blue satin doublet with flowers woven

into it, and yellow breeches, and boots worked with silver; and he had a chain of gems and gold links about his neck, like an island girl.

“ But of all, this were the strangest, that the man had a fancy for dainties like a woman; and he gorged himself with barley sweets. Yet he liked his tobacco, too, and took his snuff from a gold box.

“ Well, here we were, aboard the brigantine. She was named the *Argyle*, being a vessel seized and the name never altered; and here we had to stay. So we got to be, in time, as good men as any aboard; and one day Jack Brandt calls me aft and he makes me a mate, which set Will Cole against me, he being by nature envious.

“ Now it was that very week that, getting the third mate’s berth, and we taking a trader with good cargo and money, why, I saw it was all over for me, and that I should never go ashore again with only a dog’s wages and hunting a shark to ship me; for here was a share of prize-money and stuff bigger than I had earned in all my life; and the men calling me ‘mate’ and ‘sir,’ and looking up to me.

“ And that week, clever Nat Hawtrey put the ship on me, and he the best needle-man I ever saw. He was a week and more at it; and I was prouder of it than the new doublet and the bright pistols I wore; and so, the second mate being ‘Dan’ too,—Adkins, his name was,—why, I was ‘Dan-o’-the-Ship’ by the picture Nat Hawtrey worked on me, from the day it was done, and Jack Brandt giving me the name himself.

“ Well, we laid in ashore on Madagascar for a month and

then put out again and headed toward Ceylon; but ran up around the Laccadive Islands on our way. There, one day, we spies a ship that Brandt makes out to be a big India trader; and got up to look like one, she sure was. So we cracked on sail and after her.

“ She had a big press of sail and must have run away from us in no time, had she gone off before the wind; but no, the big fellow kept tacks down and, all of a sudden, like as though from a shift of the wind, or by bad steering, we see her taken aback, and up we run to lay her aboard.

“ But just as we get near, she brings to, hauls up her lower gun-ports and gives it to us so hot that we lose a dozen good men all in a bunch; and down flops one of the yards; while the big fellow runs up the king's cloth, and we see she's nothing but a man-o'-war in disguise. Then, just in the midst of it, when the men are for laying alongside and boarding the other, Captain Brandt takes a notion there's nothing in it for us but glory, and little of that, and turns and runs for it.

“ That was the beginning of the end for Dandy Jack; for, you see, the men don't take to a man as makes mistakes. So they were clean put out and sulky, and Captain Brandt, having had his first real taste of bad luck, didn't handle them right, but made matters worse by being harsh. Likewise, he put me forward again, for taking the part of four poor fellows he ironed.

“ But he thought a change of air was good to try, and so we ran clear across to the West Indies; went down through the Bahamas, past the foot of Cuba, and around to the Isle of Pines.

“ Now it was, as I remember, along the summer of 1703, and we had careened the brigantine, tallowed her, and made her clean for a cruise, and were in fine shape. We went up through the Windward Passage, passed Cape Maze, and were near the lower Bahamas, not far from the Hole-on-the-Rock, when we fell in with a London merchantman, the *Sir Charles*, raked her with shot, grappled and boarded her.

“ She was the richest prize we had yet taken, being loaded with a costly cargo of merchandise, bound north, to Charleston. She had, too, a matter of some ten thousand pounds sterling and a great quantity of plate.

“ Now this was well enough; but Captain Jack Brandt must needs have the vessel, for she was new and handsome. So we ran her in to Little Harbour, put out the boats and set her captain and officers and crew and eight passengers ashore; and Captain Brandt gave orders to have everything we needed stowed from the old ship into the new, and burn the old one.

“ When we had done this and stood out to sea in a hurry, getting word of a king’s ship off Salvador, Captain Jack was all in a towering fury, finding one, or, rather, two, passengers left aboard; and those two, beyond all reckoning, a woman and her child. It was all of the mate’s being soft-hearted — which, the same, be true, and yet I have seen him run a man through like a robin on a spit, and sing a song when the fighting was done. But this woman was, for certain, a fine lady, and lying ill in the best cabin, scarce able to speak, and she was too ill to be moved; and the fool let her and the child alone.

"Now Dandy Jack Brandt would have no woman and her brat lying there aft; and would have had the two pitched overboard if he hadn't feared it would bring bad luck and the men revolt. So he ordered a bunk fitted up in the spare sail-room, off the carpenter's galley, and there we stowed the woman and the child. She was a little thing, about three, I guess.

"Curious you may think — and so it were — but the men were sorry for the woman; and I've seen more than one, when he thought no one was watching, go and take a peep at her and the baby.

"However, the mother put an end to all fighting about her, in another week, by up and dying; and when we had put her overboard, why, the captain declared the first land we sighted the child should go, too, if he had to give her away to niggers.

"And this, though you may hardly believe it, made the men mad; for, sure enough, they had made a pet of her. She was right saucy, too, and would sit on Will Lewis's knee — and he were not the prettiest man aboard, either — and make him growl a tune for her; and, above all, she took to me; and the men wanted to keep her aboard for good luck.

"Now, how it came about, how do I know? How does Will Lewis know? How did honest Nat Hawtrey know? Being as it was a surprise to us all, when, one fine day, up came the men, all hands, the first and second mate's watches, and every man carrying his cutlass. This was over by the Florida straits, for we had settled on going south, to Honduras.

“ Up the men swarmed, and Dandy Jack and his mates standing white on the quarter-deck, knowing well what it meant. Then the men called out my name, good and loud, and I struck stiff with surprise, being innocent of connivance. Well, when I step forth, why, out comes long Nat Hawtrey from among them, and in his right hand he has a sword as fine as Dandy Jack’s, which he passes over to me by the blade; and is the way a new captain be chosen by the men when they have had enough of another man — but which, I swear, no man or men could do to Edward Teach, to set him down.”

From which I inferred, whether right or wrong, I know not, that John Vane had undermined Jack Brandt, but had more than met his match in Edward Teach.

“ The long and short of it,” he continued, “ was that I was in the cabin and Jack Brandt out of it; and I made honest Will Lewis here first mate, and honest Nat second, and Will Cole third; and the last, I got no good-will by, because I had not named him before the other two.”

Now what I have set down thus far, as briefly as I may, was far longer in the telling by Captain Vane. So, when night had shut down, there was, all at once, a knocking at the door; and there were Tom Appleton and Elbridge Carver come to see what had befallen me, and Will Endicott just beyond the stockade to aid them, if need be. So out I must go to them, to show them no harm was come to me, and whisper something softly for Tom Appleton to be cheerful at and to tell the others later; and he gave me a warm grip of the hand for it, and then they went

away again without me, for I was eager to be back and hear the end of Captain Vane's story.

"Will they be glad you whipped the big one?" chuckled Captain Vane, as I was seated once more.

"That they are," I answered.

"'Twas well fought," growled Will Lewis; "but I had rather it were with handspikes."

"No, no, Will!" exclaimed the other. "We shall have need yet, of that big fellow. Mind how short-handed we be." To which he added: "Do you mind, Will, how Dandy Jack left us at Honduras?"

"I mind he climbed the tree and had to be helped down."

"Ho, ho!" roared Captain Vane, smiting the table lustily. "He had to be lugged down, did Dandy Jack, like a landsman from the top, gone giddy; and the tide flowing under his feet. 'Twas a tall gallows, I swear, to let the sea come and go free and his heels clear of it.

"Better for him to have stayed along of us and taken what came to him, and plenty of good liquor, if 'twas to be drunk in the forecastle and not in the cabin. But he quit us sudden at Honduras; slipped away with Will Cole, Scudamore, and Ed Grace and a dozen others, in a little turtle-sloop we had taken. So we heard, later, he had shipped along of Quelch, whom I did see once in Madagascar.

"Well, it was early that same spring of the year 1704 that we went up along the coast, off the Carolinas, got into trouble, were chased north, and came to grief again off the Massachusetts coast, by falling in with several

ships bound toward Quebec. We were nearly taken in by them, and only cleared by running into hiding in the great Penobscot Bay; and then we hit upon this place by following along the coast.

“So, the times being hot just then, we laid by snug here for a whole winter, being well provisioned; and, when the spring came and we went south, why, we left the girl and the Cuban women here, and a few to guard them; and here we have been off and on, to this day, ever since.”

“And the locket?” I asked again.

“I be coming to that,” said Captain Vane. “Light the pipe and sit easy, man. Will ye be on nettles now, and waiting patiently all these years?” And Captain Jack Vane put a coal to his own pipe and smoked for a moment, before he went on.

“Why, 'twere a good ten years,” he said, at length, “before I ever set eyes on big Teach. It would be the year 1714, the best I can reckon — and the month I know well. We had run up out of the Bay of Campeche, having lain ashore in Honduras through October. We were in luck soon; for there was a great sand shoal that lay between the Isle of Pines and Grand Camaynos to the south-east, and there, light aground, about midway, was a big galleon from Cartagena bound in for Havana.

“She was full of doubloons and pieces of eight and Teneriffe wine, and all ours for the asking. That night we lay close by. In the morning there hove up two fine ships, coming from Jamaica, and we up to our elbows in Spanish money. By noon we had a shot go through our rigging and we cleared for action. But, just then, up goes the

scarlet flag on the big ship of the two, with a white death's-head; and up goes ours at the same moment, and that was the end of the fight, before it had begun.

“Sure enough, that were Edward Teach; and who aboard, but Will Cole and Ed Grace, and Will Cole third mate, and Teach coming to like him more and more, and would one day give him the first mate's berth; and Ed Grace likely to be a mate in time.

“Now Captain Teach would do no wrong when he was sober to men that would help him fight a king's ship; so he was fair and civil to us, and we to him, knowing the great reputation of the man and what a devil he were at fighting. He would have us go along with him, he having word of two great seventy-fours come out of the old harbour of Port Royal, looking for such as we. We were well enough suited to join him, too, for the while; so we three vessels made a pretty squadron of it. He was for lying off the south shore of Hispaniola, having an eye to the two great lines of passage where a ship thereabouts might watch for prizes.

“We joined with him, as I say, and were not badly repaid for it, until, off the Crooked Isle, one day we went aground in the fog. That was the end of our ship, and all of us bound to berth with Teach, or go hang.

“Now this Teach be a captain for any man to be proud to ship with,” continued Captain Vane. (It was a significant thing to me to note the wholesome respect Vane had for the man.) “And so, when his first mate went aboard the prize as master, and he would put me in as third mate, I would not hang back, though there was Will Cole just

above me, as second mate, and loving me like a dogfish loves a whale.

“ Well, as for the locket, it be quickly told, and yet it was a strange chance, too; for we had come out from the Isle of Providence, and run up past the Booby Rocks, and were just to the north of the big island off against Providence toward the open sea, when we picked up a fine merchantman bound in to strike the current sweeping up the Florida Gulf, for the Carolinas; and she was ready for us and stood us off for two hours.

“ When we boarded and took her she was sinking and many went down with her; but we took some aboard and picked some up adrift. And we got little enough for our pains, since she went under fast. There was only a few thousand pounds in the captain’s cabin, and some prize-money from passengers.

“ Here, among these, was the man with your locket, and were his name Jameson or James, or something different from that and yet not much unlike it, I could not swear at this day. He was come out from London to look for a wife and child; and how many trips he had made before to the same purpose is no matter; but this was not the first. He was a big man, but wasted from sickness.

“ While we were running up to Bahama, to set these people ashore, he had a way of tottering about the ship and showing a locket with a painted face in it, and asking this one and that if they’d ever seen or heard of the woman. Ed Grace had seen the woman married to a nigger king of one of the outer islands; and long Nat Hawtrey swore she was his own wife that he had left ashore in Providence;

and Jack Harwood had seen her selling fish in Port Royal. So the poor devil of an Englishman was clear sick with their cussedness.

“ I had paid no heed to the thing, but to cut Jack Harwood over the head with a rope for nagging the man, when he pulled the thing on me one day—and sure enough, took my breath away. There was the woman whose girl I had ashore, and me bringing her up along of Mackay’s Cuban woman. The man saw me clean taken aback, and what does he do but give a shriek that went into me like a knife, and drop dead in his tracks, at my feet.

“ So there’s what I know of the locket; for I took it, and the gold watch and chain, for the girl; but Teach wouldn’t have that, but it must go into the pile with the rest of the stuff; and in the lotting it fell to him. Now strange, I say, that it should turn up here again.

“ ’Twas the next winter that we got into trouble, the winter of 1715, I make it, and all along of Will Cole. But, before that, Long Nat had got it from Ed Grace, off Carolina, over a girl they picked up to the southward; and we had men aboard better to be spared, and no one left to do the marking of the men like he could.

“ This winter, near to the new year of 1716, we were working up along the north shore of Cuba in the Straits of Bahama; and we took a good sloop and ran her up the strait to the Bay of Cadiz. There was Teach in his big ship; and the mate and Will Cole and I and a crew aboard a brig we had seized, but were ready to quit for a better craft when it should come along; and so we had all sailed in to the bay to see about refitting.

“ 'Twas just before this, some time after Long Nat was put over, that I saw how the wind was blowing betwixt Teach and me; for, sure enough, Will Cole had got me at last, and there was Teach smelling me out as looking for his own ship, which I had no mind to, being well pleased where I was.

“ We got in under the lee, and Teach stripped his own ship down for repairs, and took out our guns and put them aboard the prize. Then, the new sloop being about ready and fit, away go Ed Grace and Will Cole aboard Teach's own ship; and Teach gives out that I am to get the brig to command, with a crew of my own choosing. By which, it was clear to him every man inclined toward me would be drawn out of his own crew and got aboard the brig.

“ Which was just what happened, only Jack Harwood wouldn't come, and that I took to be queer and it set me to thinking. Now who it was Will Lewis and I got the truth out of, is no matter; but we got it. Teach's game, which Will Cole put him up to, was to train the guns of the ship on the brig the next night and send her to bottom, with all of us, like dogs in a sack.

“ So, come dark next night, a dozen of us — and no more to be trusted for certain — put away from the brig, slipped alongside the sloop and boarded her. We took her as quiet as mice, there being but few of Teach's men aboard and mostly asleep. Then we weighed anchor, ready to sail.

“ We hadn't long to wait, either, for by the time of a single glass the whole bay shook, something fearful; and

the next moment there came the crash as the side of the brig was torn out; and the poor devils screaming as they went to bottom. Teach emptied every gun into the old brig. So, then, we clapped on what sail we could and stood out by him; and he cursing and foaming at the mouth like a man with a spell on him, seeing as his ship was stripped down and he had to let us go.

“ Well, he picked a few poor devils up; but six of these he wasn’t sure of, so I learned afterward, and he hanged them from water-butts.

“ We came north here on the run; and I was no more Dan Baldrick, but John Vane. And hang me if I ever stretched out a yarn to so many words since the day I first drew breath. What say, Will Lewis, didst ever hear Dan Baldrick talk like this before, on sea or ashore? ”

“ Not without more drink,” replied Will Lewis.

Now, as Captain Vane, or Dan Baldrick, ended, and would say no more, lo! it was well into the time of morning and the dips were sputtering low, and the darkness, without, thinning; and I arose to go, then stayed me for a minute.

“ Tell me,” I asked, “ where do lie the rocks, or points, or islands, of the Blind Sisters and the Four Seals? ”

“ Why, as for the first,” he answered, “ ’tis a split rock in a great bay that makes up into Virginia, the Chesapeake; and the others be small islands that lie between Virginia and Carolina.”

“ Hundreds of miles from our Massachusetts Bay! ” I exclaimed.

“ Why, yes, of course,” said he.

So I stumbled home to our cabin, heavy-headed, thinking of Ephraim and his mad wanderings after little rocks in the sea hundreds of miles away; and wondering what he would think, to know what I knew now.

CHAPTER XIX

WE SAIL SOUTHWARD

WHEN I was awake, some time the next forenoon, I was sore and aching about the body, and muddle-brained. Accordingly, I was fain to take up with big Will Endicott's suggestion to go down with him to the shore of the reach and take a dip in the sea. For this were a day as though almost of early summer, intercalated into the promise of the spring; and when we had come down to the shore, there were many little threads of water trickling over the ledges, so that already was the thin veneer of ice worn away from the surface of them in countless places.

We plunged in from a shelf of ledge and climbed out, tingling, and dressed, and ran all the way up-hill to the cabin. From this, having eaten, I had again some measure of sense in me, and so could sit and give an account of myself.

Then right proud was Will Endicott of his good pupil, that had done him and his instruction credit.

Vastly elated was honest Elbridge Carver, to hear of Elias beaten and humbled.

Proud was I, to have accomplished it.

Glad was good Tom Appleton, to have me back safe and unhurt, save the small wound; but, of all of us, was he the least rejoiced, and for the most part disturbed, at

the strange and unexpected turn of affairs over the pirate's paper.

"Now what a fool's quest will that be!" he cried, impatiently. "Pray, what be there in that blind scrawl and the sailor's doggerel along with it, to lead a man across miles of ocean to a bag of gold? Will you go by guess-work, like poor, half-crazed Ephraim? Will you let a rogue that went up to the gallows, half a score and more years gone by, set you by the ears to hunting rainbows?"

"But do you mind, Tom Appleton," I answered, soothingly, and not to be angered by him, "that rainbows be not such bad things, and all deceptive? For did we not find this island and shelter from the sea, and — and — more, at the end of a rainbow? Besides, we have now the man who knows the very island and can sail there to-morrow, without map or paper to run by."

"And did he see the treasure buried, too?" inquired Tom Appleton.

"Why, suppose he did not?" I returned.

"Will you walk up to it direct, by that rhyme?" cried Tom Appleton, almost angrily. "Will you be taking a witch-rod along — or, mayhap, the dead man's rib will do, an it turn out you find one. Does he lie under sand or sea? Pray, will you dig, think you, like Ephraim on Cape Ann, or will you 'weigh the anchor and yeave ho' whatever that may signify, and drag the waters for rusty money?"

Now I was beset by the thing, seeing it had hung about me, in a Tantalus way, for so many years; and I would be no more moved by Tom Appleton's scoffing than by the

buzzing of a bee; but yet was I grieved and sorry to have him fall out with me, liking him so well; and I went and put a hand on his shoulder and spoke gently in reply.

“Yes, good friend,” said I, “I be going for the treasure, for I have a strange feeling come over me such as never before, and like a man that has suddenly found his faith out of all uncertainties, that we shall find the stuff. And you will go along, too, will you not, and share in it?”

Tom Appleton shook his head sadly, but answered as I would have him.

“I suppose I shall,” said he; and added, smiling grimly, “for I’m thinking you’ll need a friend to stand by and comfort you, when the chase be over, and gold sticking to no man’s hand.”

“God bless you!” I cried, and threw an arm about him.

“And Mary Vane,” said he, slyly, “will she go, too, or wait here till you come again?”

Now this was like a knife through the heart; for, as I say, my brains were heavy and dull with all I had been through, so that the thought of this separation — which had been hovering about me all the while, but somehow swept aside with the rush of triumph and the sudden hope of riches — now came in upon me sharply.

However, Tom Appleton said no more, seeing I was hit, but left me to my own reflections; and so, before long, I was turned from cold to hot again, and knew how to sympathize with Ephraim as I had not before.

Then the thought of the locket came to me, till I burned with the glow of it; and I strode away over the hill to the stockade, to carry it and my story to Mary Vane.

It were well for me that I had this certain treasure, not visionary nor remote, ready in my hand when she and I were alone together, in the room just off from that where I had fought and won the afternoon before; else had I known scarce how to begin, feeling no longer for the moment any courage and buoyancy, but a strange sinking of the heart.

She, too, was knowing of much that had happened, from the recital of Captain Vane, and was yearning to welcome me; being proud of my prowess, through the praise of Captain Vane, and happy to have me safe from harm; and, withal, distressed and sadly perplexed and anxious, being by nature gentle and refined, that she should have been the cause of a fierce and cruel fight between men.

“And oh! Philip,” she cried, “will you give me the locket again, now, that I may see the dear face, and bless her for bringing you to me — which I do in truth believe — and pray her forgiveness for loving her not from the moment God did bless me with seeing her?”

For now she knew the face looking out upon us was none other than the mother that had borne her, but whom she had lost out of her childish consciousness when too young to hold in remembrance.

So, looking at the one face and the other, I did observe clearly how like they were; for there were, first of all, the same wonderful depth and mystery in the clear brown eyes; deep and calm wells, at the bottom of which lay truth and honour and courage and all things noble and womanly; and my Mary’s hair only a shadow deeper than

the other's golden brown; and the chin of each finely moulded, but firm; and the nose delicately turned at the nostrils, with no more breadth than makes for refinement, and yet not severe, as in those too correctly classical; and mouth not small enough to be prim or characterless, nor opening too broadly with smiling; and a merry, dancing, fleeting light in all the countenance, more subdued in the painting than in the face often turned to mine — though it were not there now in the face of Mary Vane.

I thought now the locket was no longer for me to wear, but that she should wear it for both of us; and so I hung it about my Mary's neck, and got repayment for that in the doing of it.

"And now, Philip," said she, of a sudden, with a strange fear in her eyes never shown to me before, "tell me that that wild rambling that Captain Vane and Will Lewis have had over, the whole morning long, about a treasure somewhere away off, to be sought after, be a thing you have no part in. Sure, you will go no voyage with those men. Will you care for treasure more than me?"

With this last, she was near to sobbing; but I tried to answer bravely, thinking how we two could make good use of treasure, and not liking her to be a poor man's bride.

"Why, for that," said I, "it is but a voyage over and done, and home again, in two summer moons at most; and a shipful of gold to keep us to the end of our days. Indeed, I will go and get my share of it; not because I love it more than you, but to get it all for you; and it shall be yours, and you shall do no toil in a cottage, but live like

Squire Andrews's wife and wear fine cloths and never homespun."

"Oh, Philip! will you leave me, then?" cried she; and I thought she was swooning, by the whiteness of her cheeks. Then she caught herself and said bravely: "But I'll not let you go;" and she tried to smile back her tears.

"Ah, but you do not understand," I went on. "Do you not see, I am but a poor fisherman, at best? And now, even our vessel, the bonny *Venture*, is gone; and will you have me tending shop for Ephraim, if, indeed, he be alive, when there be a fortune for me yonder for the going and taking it?"

"But I would not have you go to sea with the men," said she. "Will you be forgetting so soon the night of the wreck?"

"Never till the day I die," I answered. "Nor can you. But this will be no pirate venture, like to that; but an honest cruise for what was given to me fifteen years ago; and my own, of right, there being no one now to claim it with better title than mine."

With this, she seeing clearly how fast and firm an obsession there was upon me — for, in truth, the spell was cast over me beyond all power of mine to break from it — she said not much more concerning it; or, at least, not any more than a woman will who hopes still to have her own way in the end.

Moreover, in the passing of a few weeks, the venture did seem robbed of much of its perils worst to be feared; for there came one day a little sloop, going up on its way to the Penobscot, with some of Teach's own men aboard,

who were quit of the trade now and bound north to take up some land. It seemed they had been in a prize of Teach's away to the south of Carolina, when the great sea-fight was waged; and so they got clear, themselves. But Teach was no more, they said, for in this last winter, in the month of November, he had made his last stand near the port of Bath off the Carolina coast, against vessels sent out by the governor of the colony of Virginia.

Also, were half of his crew, including Will Cole and Ed Grace and Jack Harwood, killed in the fighting, and only a few getting clear and ashore into the woods and swamps.

So now, with Teach and Will Cole slain, and Major Bonnett executed, and scores of others swept from the sea, or lying by at Providence for the king's pardon, was the whole coast well-nigh cleared of the rovers; and honest men, like Dan Baldrick and Will Lewis, might venture abroad.

Which account did give a great impetus to our intentions; and Captain Vane, likewise, persuaded six of these same men to remain with us and go the voyage.

In the end, there were chosen to remain upon the island: Robert Mackay, John Trask, George Rawlins, Lawrence Sylvester, Ralph Burr, Robert Hawden, and the Cuban. All the rest of us, including Will Cole's two men, and the six men of Teach's old crew, would go the voyage.

It was, then, sometime about the first of April that we were ready to embark on the brig, or topsail schooner, *Fly*—but Captain Vane would have another name for her now, he having come to be an honest man. She was lettered over, the *Seabird*; but, as for Captain Vane, him-

self, the name he had assumed seemed like to fasten to him to the end, for no man thought to go back to the old one, save, I think, Will Lewis.

As I look back upon this voyage, of which we had come now to the beginning, am I filled with deep wonder and amazement that I could have gone about the preparation for it from day to day, with so light a heart and with so little forethought concerning its vagueness and uncertainty.

In truth, I was dancing mad with the thought of the pirate gold waiting for me to claim; and, for all my Mary's pleadings and doubts, I had ever a ready answer and a picture in my brain to hold up to her, of a fine house in our Boston town, and dresses of French cloth, and a servant to wait on her, and a thousand and one foolish fancies to beguile her — which failed to beguile her at all.

Even at the moment of our setting out, and I would have kissed away her tears, only that they fell too fast and she was not to be comforted, even then I did go aboard not sadly, but upborne by the same glittering inspiration, thinking how soon I should be back and my voyaging for ever done.

Yes, and when I had been at sea but a short two hours, the scales had dropped from my eyes, and I was no longer blind; but I saw, with all the fiercer and more maddening intensity, the folly I had committed. The one spot we were seeking seemed a mere fading shadow in a vast wilderness of gloom; and I would have given all the gold in the mountains of the earth and in the sands of the shore to be back on land; and one caress of her I loved would have been sweeter than all the treasures hidden in all time.

But now it was too late; for a fair wind was blowing us southward, and there was Captain Vane slapping me on the shoulder and calling me a fine fellow and a brave one; and I was sick of him and of his bloody crew, and my heart like lead, to think of the long, weary days to be spent with him and them in the close quarters of the brig.

However, there was no help for that; and so, as even Tom Appleton, he being once embarked on the venture, had fanned a certain flame within himself for the enterprise, and Will Endicott and Elbridge Carver also seeing a profit in it, I came into a better state of mind in a few days; and in the end I think I was as eager as any, and as hopeful.

There were, in all, sixteen of us aboard the brig; there being, besides our own party, Captain Vane and Will Lewis, George Watkins, Elias, the two of Will Cole's crew, and the six men that had been with Teach. And of these last, though I have said they were not with Teach in the great battle in which he was killed, yet I was mistaken; for it seems one of them, Charles Lambert, was; and he got ashore and into the woods and so escaped hanging.

From this man we had the truth of how great Teach had come to the end of his voyagings. For he said that when Teach had been come up with by one Lieutenant Maynard, sent out with two coasters from Virginia, he stripped for fighting and boasted at the onset that he neither gave nor begged quarter from any man. He set off a fearful broadside that killed at once nineteen of May-

nard's men on one vessel. So that the lieutenant ordered all his men below, and Teach laid the vessel aboard; which was what the other wanted. For he swarmed his crew on deck again, and then it was man to man, and a cruel and bloody piece of business.

And it seems this Maynard was a very brave man, and in no terror of Teach and his hideous black face and his huge sword, but engaged him in combat; and Teach went down before him, and half the other's crew fired upon him as he fell, so that he never rose again; and Will Cole and the others around him fell, also. Then Maynard went on up to the town of Bath, with the great, black, shaggy head of Teach fastened to the bowsprit of his vessel, for all the townsfolk to see, and be no longer in dread of him.

It was not long, either, before we came to that same Fool's Cap which had caused good Cousin Ephraim so many nights lacking sleep and so much of aimless wandering; for when we had turned the end of our great Cape Cod and had sped southward toward that end of the Long Island where the pirate, Kidd, had made many a harbouring, why, we sighted the island that they call Block Island. A headland of that would be what these men and the rovers with Quelch had named the Fool's Cap; though whether there were any aptness in the name, we sailed not close enough aboard for me to discern.

Now that on this voyaging, as it went along, there was no outbreak nor overt dissension among us, was owing mostly, I do believe, to the stress of weather which left us small time and the less energy for discord; for certain

there were among us no lack of the elements that should have brought us all to blows.

But, as I say, the contrariness of the winds and the roughness of the sea did in a great measure contribute to the keeping of the peace aboard the brig, since we were for ever shifting our course and making and shortening sail. Thus, too, we were greatly put back by reason of the weather; and the voyage which Captain Vane had hoped to make in two weeks, or a little more, took us nearer four to accomplish.

We did, on the way, go in, for shelter and to make some repairs, to that vast bay of the Chesapeake; but no nearer to the Rock of the Four Seals than fifteen or twenty miles; for Captain Vane was chafing at our tardiness. And I was wishing that Ephraim could be there; for, had he been, I swear we should have made Captain Vane put us off on the rock for a moment, and let Ephraim for once have footing upon it, for the mere requital of long and blighted yearnings.

Then, when we had been gone a day or two out from that harbourage, a great spring gale swept us southward, past the huge, gloomy sand ramparts that front the coast of the Carolinas; and the gale bore us down even off the inlet that Captain Vane called Ocracoke, in and out of which Black Teach, he said, was wont to sail.

This was below the point for which Captain Vane was making, by many leagues; though it would be some sound, or sea-lake, behind these sand-hills that he sought. The name of it, I know not, myself, having it not from him; and the inlet, I should not know the way into again,

there being many of these breaches along the sand ramparts, and the most of them, by Captain Vane's word, shifting as to their channels.

However, the gale abating, we ran back for the best of a day, and came at length to an opening in the sand-bars that Captain Vane declared to be of good and proper water; and we went in, with the breakers lying not far beyond us, and the lean strips of the sand showing hungrily as they stretched away from the ripple of the wave line.

Captain Vane would go no great way into the sound without sending on a boat ahead to look for certain landmarks to steer by; and, having got these, early next morning we worked slowly in under shortened sail, for all that day.

It was, then, on the evening of that day, and by our reckoning, the third day of May, that we ran in under the lee of a small island, some few miles in length, and stood along its shore for about three miles. Then we came to a break in its shore, like to the shape of a bottle, as near as I can liken it to anything, with the neck lying to the coast-line and the body of the bottle hollowed out of the land. Across the neck of the bottle ran a sand-bar, which we might just clear at low tide, but cleared now with a fathom and more to spare.

Being then in this landlocked pool at the hour of twilight, there was a stillness in the air, so solemn that when it was broken by the cry of some great birds there was not a man among us of nerves so steady as not to be startled; as though the prize we had come to seek had been ours

for the taking, but some one had come upon us unawares and surprised us at it.

But the anchors went down in a great, gleaming, sparkling, phosphorescent pool of gold and silver and precious, flaming jewels; and Captain Vane swore it was a vision of what was to be ours. So we were loth to see the fall of night and the land fogs rising; being consumed, as with a burning fever, to get to shore and fill our hands with treasure.

CHAPTER XX

CAPTAIN VANE IS DISAPPOINTED

By four o'clock next morning we were on deck and eager to be ashore; for the day was coming in warm and clear, and the air as soft as our early New England summer, and very fragrant with the smell of flowers. We saw now that the pool in which we lay, in the part of it that would be just inside the sand-bar, was only about an eighth of a mile from shore to shore; but that it rapidly broadened out to the width of half a mile, and extended thus inland for the length of a mile or a mile and a half.

It was clear, green water, too, and the whole lake like a thing designed for show; for through the depths of the pool there swept by us, as on parade, great schools of fish, among which we saw mullet and bass and herring, and many other varieties that we knew, and more that we did not.

This island, we now saw, lay some two, or two and a half, miles off what seemed to be the mainland, and was, according to Captain Vane, some seven miles long from easternmost to westernmost point; and, as the mainland lay due north of us, this longest extent of our island, east and west, was parallel with the shore of the mainland.

From north to south, the island would be, by Captain Vane's reckoning, not more than two and a half miles, in its widest parts, and less than two in the narrowest part. This was at about the centre of the island, or slightly west of centre, and was where the bay ran back to within that distance of the southern shore.

Looking away over the tree-tops to the east, was to be seen, extending from west to east down the centre of the island, a high ridge like a backbone, which was wooded. On the shore to the north of this ridge were one or two high points; and, again, to the west of us, some three or four miles away, were two wooded hills that Captain Vane said were the headlands of the western end fronting the sound.

At one point between these and where we lay was to be seen later a thin, silvery ribbon of creek, woven prettily into the green of the island for something like a mile.

Across the sound to the north stretched the line of the shore, very irregular and vague, with creeks and little streams and swampy land glistening on every hand; and with growths of juniper and cypress of exceeding density lying back of this.

There never were men keener to get to land than this crew of the *Seabird*; so the brig was scarce made snug and the mess over, when there was a scrambling for the boats; but Captain Vane would have myself and one other remain with him and Will Lewis. So Will Endicott and I stayed aboard; and as for Tom Appleton and Elbridge, they went no farther away than to the shore of the pool for a swim.

When the last boat had left us and the brig was cleared of all but us four, Captain John Vane would have us all come into the cabin and sit us down with him; and a cup of wine for each. Then, treating us most confidential, he laid before us the reason of calling us together; and, with Will Lewis's connivance, there was broached for our approval a scheme which was no more nor less than rank treachery toward Will Cole's and Teach's men.

But first, he disclosed to us how it had mattered naught to him what Jack Brandt had written, whether of rhyme or what-not, so long as Vane knew there had been treasure left somewhere on the island by the other. For it seemed by his own word now that he had been upon this island, not twice, as he had told me of, but as many as five or six times; and he and Will Lewis and Jack Brandt and Christopher Scudamore had made two caches at opposite ends of the island and hidden money and arms there.

Moreover, they had ever in their selection of a suitable hiding-place one thing in mind in especial: to go up and back far enough from the low marshy ground to keep the cache dry. Therefore, Captain Vane had no more doubt than that the tide came and went but that he could find the place where the treasure would be hidden, even if Jack Brandt and Scudamore, and perhaps Quelch, had chosen a new spot, away from the old.

Now the move that had been planned between him and Will Lewis was not made openly and boldly by Captain Vane; but he would have it broached by indirection, to see how it should be received by us. So he had given it to Will Lewis to say.

Then, presently, Will Lewis, as of a sudden inspiration, put out with it :

“ See here, Dan,” he said, and, by his words, vesting the title to the treasure already in the other, “ you be a fool an you will give away your gold to these dogs of Teach and Will Cole. Will you share and share alike with Will Cole’s men, that came to the stockade to hang you, and with Teach’s men, that sank the vessel? Will you be owing them gold for that? ”

“ Why, I do owe them a rope and a water-butt, for each man, for the matter of that! ” cried Captain Vane, with well counterfeited surprise. “ But what of that? ’Tis a close island, and how will treasure be found and got aboard here and they not smelling the musty odour of it? ”

“ Let them have a taste, while we have a feast,” said Will Lewis. “ The most to you and him,” — pointing to me, — “ and the next best to them as has served you true; and a bite to the rest when we have the bulk below and a trifle on deck to divide amongst all.”

“ And pray, Will, how would you manage that? ” asked Captain Vane.

“ Why, you be growing less up to tricks with rusty years ashore,” replied Will Lewis; “ for even I, with no head but for straightaway slashing and firing, can see a clear course for that. Let you and these two here lead a party as shall find the treasure; and let the others follow me away to the other end of the land. When the best be got aboard, why, find the rest over again, with a roaring and plenty of tongue-clattering at the end, because there be no more of the stuff to pass around.”

To this, Captain Vane made no answer, sitting as one reflecting hard on the matter; but waiting, in truth, not to be committed till he might see how the plan hit us.

Nor was he long in finding out; for neither big Will Endicott nor I would have part in it. So that Captain Vane, knowing that in a division of forces he should have the smaller party, in the end came over, as though by honest conviction, to our way of thinking.

"No, no! Will," said he, "let old scores go by the board now; for Will Cole and Teach be dead men, and these good fellows were but led by them into dishonesty. Indeed, Will Lewis, though I like you no less for wishing it, seeing the wrong these men once did us, yet I do, in truth, like this big man and brave Philip Campbell the better for standing out against you, and saying fairly what they think."

And there was Dan Baldrick in his true element, swimming in deceitfulness like a fish.

"There is like to be enough for all," said he, "an it falls out as Jack Brandt did say. What were it, lad, 'yellow money, piled high?'"

"Aye, it was that," I answered; but somehow, I know not why, there was not so great assurance in me as before we had ventured upon the voyage.

That afternoon, early, we got started, every man of us, with Captain Vane and Will Lewis in the lead; like sailors frolicking on shore leave. For some of the men, with liquor and freedom, were bawling sea songs and larking about; and every man thinking, no doubt, he

should soon be plunged to the elbows in yellow doubloons and pieces of eight.

Captain Vane led us along, we having crossed to the easterly side of the harbour in boats, away toward the middle and eastern part of the island, where the land rolled up into a ridge overlooking the rest of the country. We ascended easily to the summit of this ridge, going up through a grove of hickory and chestnut and some wild holly; and went along the backbone of the ridge to where a growth of pines seemed to mark some sort of division of the soil.

“Now,” said Captain Vane, pointing down along the boles of the tall trees, “somewhere among these, near the falling down of the ridge to the shore, there be a wedge of pines, eighteen or twenty odd of them in a clump; and in the point of the wedge did Jack Brandt and Will, here, and I once make a cache — though what may have been hidden away in it since my day, we shall know the better shortly. However, the first man to spy the spot shall levy on the rest of us.”

Then there was a hurried scattering and scrambling here and there; and all of us chasing in and out among the trees, and up and down the slopes of the ridge, with noses to the ground, like hounds scenting a covert.

Now, curiously enough, the place we sought was first discovered by both Captain Vane and myself at one and the same moment, although we chanced to be looking toward it from opposite directions; and, at the cry we raised, the crew came on the run from all directions, like

a lot of wild men, yelling and howling out that the treasure had been found.

Then, being equipped with mattocks and spades, we began, every man of us, upon a plot of ground lying, as Captain Vane had indicated, at the apex of a handsome group of pines, that served as a wind-break for a part of the ridge near the end of the island.

I had never seen — I shall never see — labour and mad exertion such as this by us now. We tore open the bosom of the ground, interlaced most tenaciously as it was with a tangle of roots and running vines, hard to cut asunder with the keener edge of the mattocks.

Down we went on every hand into the earth, which soon became sandy beneath the overlying loam of the forest; and every man toiling as though for dear life; till all at once the thing we were doing did come upon me as fairly shameful.

Yet I did toil most terribly and anxiously with the others; and suddenly came upon some object that — had the thing befallen me a month before — would have shaken me with anticipation like a reed in a wind; but now it sent no great thrill through me, for all that my spade hit upon something hard and firm and which, struck repeatedly, gave out a half-hollow sound, like a tub beaten on its bottom.

Not so with Will Lewis and big Will Endicott; for they were in the hole, grovelling and digging furiously. The next moment, they had upturned a great cask, somewhat worm-eaten, but otherwise sound and hard, and iron-fastened; very heavy to be lifted, so that, with much

effort, we rolled it up out of the hole on to the turf. There, in another instant, the head of it was beaten in by the blows of Will Endicott's mattock. Crowding around it, was the crew, like a flock of vultures.

Never were men doomed to sharper disappointment; for out of the shattered chines of the cask there rolled a few paltry pieces of silver, dulled, and of little value; with no gleam of riches in them for men sharp-set and hungering greedily for a great treasure. For the most part, was this stupid cask filled with small arms, of beautiful and intricate make; pistols, silvered and chased in the barrels and stocks; knives, pearl-handled, or the handles of rich woods wrought into fantastic designs of birds and women and fish; and there were many curious ornaments, of little value to us.

So, the rubbish — for such it was in our eyes — was angrily thrown aside by the men; and they fell again to digging, cursing for fools whoever had planted the stuff.

There was nothing in the cask for any man's fancy — since one and all spurned the few trifling pieces of eight like that much dirt — but for Captain Vane's. He, alone, picked from the discarded mess a great knife, with the handle richly made of pearl and chased with gold. This he examined most carefully and then thrust it in his belt; after which, I did observe he stood back from the men and worked no more.

But in all the digging there came nothing more to light save a huge canvas bag, or sack, coated thickly with tar against its rotting. In this sack was a great quantity of powder, caked very dry and hard, but still apparently

good. Of this there was, by guess, a half-barrel; and the men would have put a match to it and touched it off and blown the whole top of the hill asunder, but that Captain Vane stayed them; so they let it lie in the hole where it had been unearthed.

All the stuff we had found, therefore, had been uncovered in one spot; and although the digging was continued around about on all sides of this, there was nothing more revealed. Then, by the latter end of the afternoon, the men, liking not hard labour, desisted from the enterprise, fetched out what liquor had been brought and fell to drinking. So that they were straggling back to the ship all evening; and, indeed, many did not return at all, at least half of them sleeping off in the woods.

Nor on the morrow was there much hankering for the search, the men being sore and lame and sick from their carousing; and even Captain Vane, himself, I thought, having his first taste of irresolution in the matter of the treasure. So, as I recall it, there was nothing done for the next day at all.

Moreover, did Captain Vane continue for all of the day in a fit of moodiness and ill humour, sulking in the cabin; and Will Lewis, even, could not rally him out of his condition.

Not until that night did I discover the cause of it, and that by the passing of a few words with Will Lewis, when I did remark upon the sudden change of heart in Captain Vane.

“And why not?” muttered Will Lewis. “Does it not look bad enough?”

“ Why, it be only our first trial,” said I. “ At the least, we do know now for certain that we have made no mistake in the island. Will there not be more and better hidden elsewhere, think you? ”

“ Aye, but did you not see the knife? ” asked Will Lewis.

“ The knife! ” I exclaimed.

“ Yes, for certain, the knife! ” he cried. “ Did Dan show it not to you? ”

“ I saw him pick a rich one out from the rest and carry it away in his belt, ” I answered. “ But what of that? ”

“ Come in and see, ” said Will Lewis, dragging me along by an arm. So we went into the roundhouse, where Captain Vane sat, heavy with drink, at a table.

“ Give us the knife, Dan, ” said Will Lewis; and he reached, himself, and drew it out from the other’s belt.

“ What will you make of that? ” he asked, and passed it over to me by the handle.

There, on the handle, as I received it, was plainly to be seen — even as I had seen it before on the pistols of Blackbeard — the letter “ T ” inlaid elegantly in the mother-of-pearl with yellow gold.

“ Teach! ” I cried, astounded.

“ Aye, Black Teach, curse him! ” roared Will Lewis. And at the wrath of his voice, uprose Dan Baldrick and cried out also, “ Aye, man, ’tis Black Teach; and will ye glean for gold and treasure when he has had the first picking? The game will be as good as up. ” And he fell back at the table, and drank again, and was asleep before

our eyes in a moment, slumping off heavily on the floor of the cabin.

“Come away,” said Will Lewis, going out upon deck once more. “It be not half so bad as he takes it, I’m thinking. Let him sleep it out; and, if he be not of another mind to-morrow, then he be not Dan Baldrick, but some other man. Bah! There will be gold aboard yet. The air smells of it.” So he lighted a pipe, and smoked himself off to sleep.

It was as Will Lewis had forecasted; for Captain Vane, having slept off his discouragement, was a man of zeal again the next day; and he sent out, through the morning, to gather up the men that were scattered here and there ashore, for another expedition to the western and southern end of the island. So, by noon, having eaten and made ready, we all set off again, though not in so high feather as before.

There would be no long searching for this hiding-place, since Captain Vane, it seemed, had it clearly defined by the conformation of the rocks that made out into the sound in a headland there. We journeyed straight, then, down through some meadow-land, then clearing the marshes that skirted the creek, and over to the south and western shore.

When we had come up to this, by the middle of the afternoon, we saw before us a series of little hills, formed of crumbling, brittle rock, like piles of gigantic slabs thrown into heaps, and with scrubby pines and stunted bushes and shrubs clinging on to the mass here and there.

Up into the heart of this pile went Captain Vane, and

came presently upon the blank face of a ledge, shelving inward, with a great flange of rock overhanging. This was hung about, as by a curtain, with long, drooping pendants of ferns and vines and grasses. In against this cave, thus fashioned by the giving way of the ledge beneath and the overjutting shelf, was heaped a great mass of loose rock, and sea sand thrown in amongst this, and the whole overgrown now with weeds and what seemed to be wild strawberry.

Captain Vane set us to clearing this away, lifting out the loose rock and digging away the sand; so that shortly there was exposed a sort of natural cave hollowed at the base of the cliff.

Here it did seem we were like to meet with some measure of success; for we came suddenly upon a great sea-chest, strongly banded with iron, and fastened with an enormous lock and three ponderous sliding bolts. Moreover, this chest, the lid of it being forced with one of the mattocks, did, in truth, disclose to our eyes a shining surface of golden money; so that we were on the moment all beside ourselves, and yelling that we had found the treasure at last, and every man eager to feel the touch of the yellow coin between his fingers.

But, alas! the gold was, so to speak, mere top-soil; a rich dressing spread over dross and grosser stuffs, being of no depth. For of this money, there was not in all more than a thousand pounds, which, among sixteen of us, would pay but a sorry dividend on our labours and expectations. We came, all too soon, beneath the layer of money, upon a trifling and flimsy assortment of odds and

ends — ornamental things, such as lanterns and candlesticks and knives and drinking-cups; all of clever workmanship, but of bastard metal.

Upon this, having had their expectations raised high, and now the descent therefrom being sharp and bitter, there arose an angry clamouring among some of the men — they being simple fellows mostly, and nigh as fickle as children — to be quit of the place at once and give over the search for the treasure.

But here was Captain Vane showing himself again to be a man fit to lead them; for he put a bold face against their despondency, and vowed the island would be jammed from one end to the other with treasure buried by Jack Brandt.

Moreover, this, he said, was not a bad day's work, which would be followed by better; and were it not likely, he asked, that there should have been several caches rather than one or two, the better to guard the treasure against discovery.

Also, seeing the game was growing desperate, and the better to show his faith in the enterprise, he swore he would make over his share of what we had got already, to the crew; since there would be plenty for him of what would yet be found.

At the worst, he demanded, were they not in a better and fairer place than New England at this time of the year? And might they not abide content for awhile, gold or no gold? And, in the end, he cried out that he would lead them somehow to better fortune, either on land or sea. Which, indeed, I liked not to hear him say. He

vowed, moreover, that no man who stood by him should go back empty-handed. By this, he got them again into a more sanguine humour, and so back to the vessel, with no serious outbreak amongst them.

CHAPTER XXI

SIX MEN ALONE

Now, for a series of days, there was no manner of work done by any one, nor any systematic search begun. The first flush of disappointment being by, and the men ill-disposed toward labour, they were well enough content to see the days drift by in idleness; hoping for something good to happen upon the morrow, but setting naught on foot to-day to bring forth the morrow's satisfaction.

So, the season being well advanced into beauty and softness, the men were for quitting the vessel for the time, and setting up some awnings made of the spare sail-cloth, to lie under, sheltered from the dew, by night; and bringing out from the brig a quantity of blankets, and also fashioning a great stove for cooking on shore.

For the island, unlike the adjacent mainland, was in most part free from any marsh-land, and was of fine, sandy soil, quickly drained after a rain and very healthy. There were, too, three or four pretty, sheltered brooks coming down from the ridge that lay to the east, and falling toward our harbour, where they babbled out upon the white sand of the shore, with fresh, clear water. So we need not lack for that to drink.

We set up several of these little encampments with the canvas for the night, although we mostly made a

common mess through the day. So there would be commonly Will Endicott and Elbridge and Tom Appleton and I encamped together; and Teach's men by themselves, and so on.

But we had now and again one of Teach's men along with us. He was one Herbert Randlett, and he had taken a great fancy to Will Endicott. He was a clever fellow, and not a bad companion, though he had been, by his own confession, a pirate for eleven years, and no doubt was a great rascal.

But most curiously, and neither sought nor to be accounted for by me, had the behaviour of Will Lewis now become toward me. He had been never a man given to speech nor sign of friendliness; but now it was ever a good word for me when we were met, and a putting of confidence in me by words concerning things of no real importance.

So I go back to his coming up to us, one morning early, and sitting down, with his pipe, and smoking for a time silently. But, by and by, when the others had gone out, he said of a sudden, most abruptly:

“And the hulking man, Elias, who got the beating by you, what will he have nowadays to say for himself?”

“That you will be like to know better than I,” I replied; “since he comes not near us ever, nor for all the voyage had word with us.”

Then Will Lewis, withdrawing his pipe and levelling it at me by the stem, said strangely: “Have a look out for him! Have a sharp look out for him, man. I think some day he will be plotting mischief.”

This abrupt warning did, indeed, disconcert me more than I would admit of, and partly from the very vagueness of it; for Will Lewis in the next breath did declare he knew of no certain piece of villainy yet on foot.

“Will he come upon me in the night?” I asked, wondering if Will Lewis knew more than he would say.

“Not that!” cried he. “No, he will not dare. For, mind you, Phil, there be too many of us who do know of the good fight you made against him; and ‘twould be a short rope for him to do you harm by night, with the crew liking you well for beating him.”

“No,” added Will Lewis, lifting his gaunt limbs up from the earth and slouching slowly away, “I know not what he will be about, only that he be much with Dan, and I think he has more favour from day to day; and I have seen his like before, having had the handling of many men — and I will see him do you no treachery, for the way you did stand up to him.”

So Will Lewis went his way.

Now whether this were all pretence and the mere working out of the scheme to our undoing, I know not; but I do know that he spoke it fairly.

So matters went along from day to day, with no planning, but by mere adventure; and yet there was a searching here and there about the island in desultory fashion, and mostly by Captain Vane and Will Lewis and the four of our party.

But of one thing I was now grown certain: that when the treasure were found — if it did not for ever elude us — it would be according to the paper, and even by the

clumsily running rhyme, that had been given to me so many years ago; and I think perhaps Captain Vane, himself, would be coming to my way of thinking. For now and again he would ask me how the lines of it went, since, curiously, he could not retain them well in mind, in spite of their easy singsong.

Then there came a day when the truth of my contention did seem likely to be borne out; for there came running into camp one afternoon, by the falling of twilight, the sailor Watkins. He was winded with running and agitated with deep excitement, having covered something more than a mile and a half, up-hill and down, from a point close by the northern shore of the island, and to the eastward of us, at a desperate pace.

He bore in one hand a yellow, brittle piece of bone, like to have come from a man's thigh; and, with this, a rusty bit of buckle that he had picked up close by the other, as though it had been once a part of the clasp that had belted in a man's living body.

It seems that he had come upon these in a little gully up from the shore, having chanced to see the bone in passing by along the beach below; so that he went up to examine further. Then he had discovered what seemed to have been once a mound, or heap of stones, but which had washed apart and were somewhat scattered by the flooding of water. Having dug a little, with the end of a branch cut from a tree, he had disclosed enough to see that a man had once been buried there; and at this he had set off for the harbour.

So there we were, glowing red once more, like so many

brands of touchwood fanned with a bellows; and every man scrambling for his spade or mattock, and bawling out again, as before, that the treasure was found.

As for Captain Vane, he, being harder-headed, was for waiting till the morning. But they were so many crazed men, who would hear to no delay; and they brought ashore from the carpenter's galley a half-dozen ship's lanterns; and, in short, went off over the fields like a herd of cattle stampeding.

We found the spot, in due time, with George Watkins to lead the way. It lay hard by a boulder, with some live-oak encircling it, save to seaward, where the bank fell away to the shore. Here, of a certainty, had some poor fellow been laid away, with, I think, a great cloak wrapped about him; for there were some shreds of dull gold strands that seemed to have faced it, and some tarnished silver buttons.

Along with these were tumbled out rudely the bones of what had been a man, and the skull; and the men cheering and bawling joyously, as though it were a pleasant sight to see. However, by the light of the lanterns, held down into the great hole that was quickly dug, there was not so much as a single copper penny to be seen, nor any token of treasure hidden away with the buried man.

But Captain Vane cried out, unexpectedly, that this was as it should be, and that we were on the right track at last.

“How will the rhyme run, Philip?” he demanded. “Is it not to sight across from the skull to the toe? And

did the beggar not lie head to land and feet to the shore? Why, that brings it right to go with the words at the finish, 'weigh the anchor and yeave-ho!' That will take us out to a point across on the mainland, for sure; and doth account for Jack Brandt's saying that it would puzzle me to find it, which would not be so, an the stuff were on this island."

"Stay your digging, men," he added; "and good luck I did note how the man lay, before you had him mixed head and heels. Why, in the morning, we shall but put a boat across, sighting carefully, and 'twill be going straight by the written word to the stuff."

We went along back once more to the vessel; with the men clamouring for me to say the doggerel over and over to them on the way. And by and by they got the thing, themselves, by rote, and even pitched it to a jangling tune. So they bawled it out all the way to the vessel, till I would be near mad with the silly sound of it — and half the night it was ringing in my ears.

We were out again and on foot early next morning, with a great eagerness. Captain Vane was, it would seem, the most sanguine of any, and putting life into the men as only he was able to do; and gaunt Will Lewis was leering so that no man might look uglier than he; and even Elias no longer stolid, but having the gold-hunger in his eyes, and his heavy face lighted up as with the reflection from yellow treasure.

We got two ship's boats out through the narrows, with all on board; and there were even some great canvas sacks thrown into the bottom, for the stowing of the stuff. Thus

we went rowing down alongshore, hallooing and shouting for the best part of the way.

Then, at the spot where we had dug the night before, we landed on the beach, and Captain Vane and Will Lewis and Tom Appleton and I went up to get the bearings. There could be apparently no serious deviation on our part; for, sighting across on a line with the skeleton from head to foot, it brought us over to a tiny cape, or peninsula, with a deep indentation of bay and swamp land on either hand.

So we went back into the boat and started off for the mainland, the men putting their backs into the rowing, though the day was coming on hot.

When we had reached the peninsula, there was hardly waiting to get the boats hauled out upon the shore before the men had scrambled up the bank, and were scattering here and there, as though the treasure were to be picked up like nuts brought down by the first black frost.

Then, when we had found that the point we had landed on was but a jutting out of a solid ledge, and no more to be digged into than the oaken sides of our vessel, still we were led on here and there over the marsh-land, by the dividing of this point of land into diverse narrow causeways; but which, being followed, brought us all, one by one, into a wretched country, sunken into many pitfalls and queachy bogs; so that, before long, half the men were calling for help, being trapped in the treacherous holes of the marshes.

In truth, this mainland here, bordering the sound, was an accursed country, fit for no man to set foot into; and

we thought it the most abandoned and hopeless bit of God's earth we had ever seen. So we were right glad to be quit of it, by afternoon, and to be rowing back to our island.

Now, being grievously weary with our hard wanderings, we were so many dumb men on the way back, save that once, Elias, who was in our boat, did look at me sneeringly, and, said he:

"This be a fine fortune you'll have brought us all these miles for. You were as good a guide in the old days for Ephraim, I'll be thinking."

And this were the first word from him to me since the day of our battle; nor did he say more, nor did I reply to him, nor did any man take up the remark.

But this very silence were a grievous thing for me to dwell upon, since it were as plain as noonday what every man would be thinking; and it be ever a sorry plight, to be the fairest mark in sight when others are looking for some one to put the blame for failure upon.

Now I had feared this last piece of folly would throw Captain Vane into one of his black moods, and he would be out of heart with the whole enterprise. But you should have seen him put a new edge upon the zeal of the men when they were once more back upon our island; and that, at the very time when they had gone clean despondent.

Indeed, so well did he play his part, that I had even half a liking for the man, to see him meet each and every one according to this and that one's bent of mind; and take each man cleverly into his confidence and show him how the treasure would yet be ours; and so bring them,

one after another, into a renewal of hope and an eagerness to continue.

So, when he would have us set off on a new expedition, four days after this, to the part of the island we had left unvisited, that is, the point to the north, over beyond the creek, why, the willingness of the crew, and of us all, was no small matter of wonder to me.

This would be no holiday jaunt, to be begun and ended in an afternoon; but he would have us pack a lot of stores to keep us for two days, and fetch along our pans and kettles for cooking, besides the tools we would dig with; and also the spare canvas to lie under at night. This, he vowed, moreover, would be but the beginning of a search that we should make clear around the entire coast of the island, picking out the likely places where the stuff might be hidden.

“And come this to naught,” cried he, “then, an you still follow Jack Vane, you shall go back with money to spend and no stint, since there be good treasure to be taken at sea, if not ashore.”

At this there was a loud hurrahing and a setting off in gallant humour, at least for all but Tom Appleton and Will Endicott and Elbridge Carver and me. But this last speech of Captain Vane’s set it sharply before us whither we were drifting.

It was the first of the afternoon that we started out, each man sacking his portion of the stuff to be carried. We followed along the shore to the north and west of the island; and, indeed, we might have put the stuff into boats and gone that way, but that there lay off to this northwest

entrance to our harbour a chain of black reefs, with their tops not enough covered even at high water, to put a boat over, or anywhere among them.

When we had followed the beach for about a mile, we struck down diagonally toward the shore of the creek, about a mile further, where it ran into the island a considerable distance. There was a place, about midway of its course, where the land was not so marshy but that we could get easily to the water, and so could save the skirting of it away around by its southern end. For we quickly cut a few trees by the shore, and made a little raft that carried us all across to the other side, in two or three trips.

Then, taking it leisurely, we struck off over a rising country, among little tumbling hills, toward the north-west end of the island, where we should set up the camp for the night.

Here, shortly, Captain Vane came upon a good spring of sweet water in a thin growth of pine wood and live-oak; and he pitched on the place for us to stop. So we encamped much the same as we had by the shores of the harbour, with the same agreeable divisions amongst us. As for Captain Vane and Will Lewis and Elias and most of Vane's men, they were only a few feet away; but the others went back a little distance toward the creek, to be by themselves.

So, the evening coming on, we made our fires and ate our suppers, and had each a dram of liquor, and sat and smoked, with I know not what fancies for the morrow.

Shortly, however, came over Will Lewis again, and

sat him down, with his pipe; and he did see plainly by the looks of us four that we were in bad spirits over the alternative we were facing.

“Ye be over-sober much,” said he, right to the point. “Will you fear now we have not Jack Brandt’s island, after all?”

“I do yet believe that,” I answered; “but — but —”

“But we have no stomach for this pirating,” broke in Tom Appleton; “and we shall, I think, go not in for it, even though the treasure here be not forthcoming.”

“Look ye,” cried Will Lewis. “May the devil take all pirating henceforth! And so says Dan Baldrick when the crew be not by. Will you let a sop thrown to the men put you in the doldrums? Do you think he will like now at this day to go off like Teach and Will Cole — aye, like Dandy Jack Brandt, himself — now that the business be as good as done for? Pray, how will you keep the dogs at work but by a smart promise, since there be so little gold as yet in sight?”

“Take the word of Will Lewis, we go not pirating again, but back straight for the island; for Dan, I say, has had enough of the life and will fancy it now no more than you.”

“Turn ye in now and sleep well for the work to be done in the morning,” said Will Lewis, in conclusion, and turning away after a few more pulls at his pipe. “And here, Dan will have you take a sup of the good brandy, to keep out the dew and to put better hearts in each.”

With which, Will Lewis stepped back a few paces and drew out a pewter bottle and passed it over to me. “Think

no more of pirating," said he again as he departed. "Think no more of pirating; for, on Will Lewis's word, ye shall have naught of it."

In all of which, Will Endicott and Elbridge and Tom Appleton and I had no certain faith, not knowing what to make of him; but we were glad of the liquor, being down in courage; and it were heavy stuff.

It was along about four o'clock next morning, or a little earlier, that I was roused up by the cawing and chattering of some crows that had alighted in the branches of the pines above us, and were quarrelling, it seemed, among themselves. I remember I thought it comical for a few minutes, to hear them berating one another like so many Cousin Mercys; and I lay and listened to them, and could even fancy I understood the purport of what they said, some memory of old scoldings coming back to me.

But, then, shortly, their noises came to annoy me, I having fallen back into a drowse once or twice and being brought awake by them. So I got up, very sleepily, and picked up a dead brand from the last night's fire and hurled it up as far as I could into the branches, shouting out at the same time, though not loudly.

The crows, according to the manner of them, being seized of fright, were struck all of a sudden dumb, and flew away silently and swiftly, nor uttered a sound till they were out of harm's way; when they circled about afar off, being curious to know what enemy was near, and screaming and crying out one to another, like a parcel of schoolboys.

Well, this was a thing familiar to me from boyhood;

for I had heard them, hundreds of times, chatter in this very style in the woods about the ponds at home; and, somehow, the thought came back to me of Ephraim's farm and the old days upon the ponds, with its foolish play of piracy — and never a foreshadowing, then, that I should come to consort with pirate men of flesh and blood, and go in quest of real pirate gold.

Now all this were but a half-glance out upon the morning, for I was drowsy with the sudden solution of sleep, and my eyelids heavy; and I was yearning to be back upon the bed of branches that we had spread our blankets over.

Yet, I did, in truth, take in, without the sense of what I saw, a fact that would soon come upon me stronger. That was, that looking over toward the other canvas that Captain Vane and Will Lewis and Elias and the others had spread above them for the night, there were no longer any forms of men lying there beneath it. But, for the moment, it came to my mind only that they had arisen early, and, perchance, had gone down to the creek.

So I went in again and laid me down and shut my eyes; and pulled the blanket about me, and felt very comfortable and at peace with the world.

Then, all at once, it came upon me in a flash, the strangeness of their absence; for the light was not yet over the tops of the hillocks from the eastward, but the sky beginning only to glow faintly with the coming in of the morning. Moreover, these men were ever sluggish in their arising, and not often stirring till the sun was in their faces.

Then something seemed to strike me a blow that set up a dull drumming in my brain; and the pain of it racked

me such as I had never felt before; which was but the consciousness of the truth flooding over me, sharp and certain.

I struggled to arise, and could not. I tried to call out to Will Endicott, who was nearest me; and my throat was gripped as by a strangler's hand, so that only a choking, groaning murmur issued from my lips.

Then I lay for an interval of what seemed endless time, but was for not more than a few moments, perhaps, unable to move or speak.

By and by, I seemed to lift a body of lead off the boughs, and got up on my feet; and the next I remember, I found myself over at the other camp, staring stupidly about and groping even among the blankets, like a foolish person; as though men might be hidden beneath them — and there was no one there.

And, oh! the getting of Will Endicott awake. I know I lay down beside him once and cried, at what seemed the utter hopelessness of it; for the man felt me not at all when I would try to shake him, the strength being well-nigh departed from me. Then I think all at once I gathered strength and clutched him like a drowning man; and he came awake and stared up at me in amazement.

I must have looked ghastly to him, for he sprang up suddenly and cried out to know what ailed me. I think he believed me crazed by our troubles.

“They're gone! Will,” I whispered, and could scarce hear the sound of my own voice. It sounded like the voice of some one else, far away. “They've gone!” I gasped again. “We're left — deserted.” I pointed out toward

the other camp. Then my legs collapsed all at once, so that I went down upon the ground, with the tears streaming from my eyes.

At this, Will Endicott only cried out, "Oh, God! Philip," and he could say no more, but turned to where Elbridge was lying asleep; and he fell, himself, all in a heap before he got to him. So there we were for a moment, both of us helpless, as I have seen sailors struck down by the gibing of a boom at sea, and gasping, with the breath knocked out of them.

But presently Will Endicott staggered up and stumbled over to Elbridge; and there, thrice before my eyes, I saw him try to utter Elbridge's name, but the word stuck in his throat. And I was looking on, shivering, icy cold, though the morning was hot; and I had not sense enough to try to help Will Endicott.

However, Will Endicott got Elbridge awake, by fumbling over him and shaking him, so that Elbridge got up with a start, not seeing at first who it was by him, and fearing treachery.

Of all ghastly things on earth to me, it was to see Elbridge standing up, amazed, with wide open mouth, and his big ears standing out straight from his head, as they always did, and his homely face blank with wonder. Yet I fell of a sudden to laughing, as a man will in delirium, and could not stop till I thought I was like to die with a horrible suffocating pain in the pit of my stomach. The next moment, I was crying out again, and biting at the branches on the ground.

The next thing I have any clear memory of, we were

running, all four of us, Will and Elbridge and Tom Appleton and I. When and how Tom Appleton became acquainted of our plight, I know not; only that he was with us, and we were going on in a confused way toward the spot where the others of the crew had lain. They were no longer there, nor anywhere to be seen. So we set off running again, for the shore of the creek, some two miles distant, to where the raft had been drawn in.

I have a vague, cruel remembrance of our falling against one another, and tumbling down and dragging one another up, like drunken sailors on a spree. But we got, at length, to the shore of the creek, in some way. And the raft was gone.

The footprints of the men were all about; and then, across the creek, on the other shore, we saw the raft drawn up partly out of the water. So we could have no further doubt now, if indeed we had had any, of the flight of Captain Vane and the men.

I know it seems beyond belief, but, as true as I live, we could not swim this creek now, though it was only a few rods wide here; and for a moment we sank down upon the shore, helpless. However, Will Endicott got up soon, and cursed himself for his weakness, and ran as hard as ever he could and dashed into the water, with the same desperate look in his face that I had seen the first night I ever set eyes on him.

The way he swam would have made a schoolboy laugh; but it was a pitiful thing for us to see. He beat the water with his great arms like a drowning man, like a man taking his first swim beyond his depth and suddenly quit of his

courage. Twice he went under, and we thought him lost; but he got to shore, and lay there, half in and half out of water, without strength to go up the bank. And there, on the opposite side, stood Tom Appleton and Elbridge and I, whimpering like children, till Will Endicott came over with the raft, in a little while, and took us all across.

Then we were up and running again for dear life, with two miles to cover between us and the harbour; nor was there a step of the way but that we were groaning with every breath.

Well, we came up near the harbour, at last. I think it must have been close on to five o'clock when we reached it, and got to a little knoll where we could overlook the water. And — oh, God! there was what we dreaded to see, out beyond the bar, not yet a mile from shore: the little vessel, scooning lightly from wave to wave, the sun gleaming on her canvas, and men going about the decks.

When we had come down upon the shore, lo! we were not alone in our misery, nor was the treachery of Vane and Will Lewis and Elias all for us; for we found two men, Randlett and one of Will Cole's crew, bound hand and foot, and cursing and screaming like mad men for us to set them free. But I know we only sank down beside them, with the tears streaming from our eyes; and of us all, the men pinioned, and we unbound, there was no man among us less helpless than another.

CHAPTER XXII

FRIENDS DO NOT BEAR MALICE

AFTER a time — I know not how long — it seemed as though I had come suddenly awake once more; and with this new awakening was there born within me a great and overwhelming sense of shame, and a dread to look into the eyes of these three good comrades of mine. So I got up and stole away from them, and was relieved when they made no move to follow.

I sat apart from them, like an outcast, and gazed seaward upon a voyage commencing, but of which my fancy leaped forward at a bound to its end.

There was the little brig, pitching ever so lightly, laying a course to the eastward to fetch the inlet some thirty odd miles away. On and on sped I in fancy, across gray, blue, black deserts of water, and saw this little craft swing in by the rocks of Round House, along the shores of the reach, and come to, with fluttering sails; and men and women running down to the shore from the stockade, and one girlish figure flying past the others, with arms outstretched. Then a mist would come before my eyes, shutting out all — and I was clutching hard into the sea-sand and tearing away the links of grass.

Then, the vessel going away from us, so mysteriously, vaguely, phantom-like, was to me a thing unreal, unnatural — no ship of wood and iron, but a thing of sense and feeling; and I would breathe a prayer after it, that would be borne on and carried by it to her I loved.

I was near blind with gazing fixedly at the brig, feeling that when it once were lost to sight I must fall down and die; and so my eyes were smarting with the strain and blurring, and once I rubbed the sand from my hands into them and suffered unnamable agony.

Then, as the brig would, I saw, become hidden by the hills shortly, according to its course, I set off back along the shore of the harbour on my way down the island. I had no means of crossing, but must go all the way around, they having left us not so much as a ship's boat. Thus, alternately running and walking, I went all the way back to the head of the harbour, a mile and a half, and so on around to the opposite, or eastern, shore, and thence down along the beach toward the end of the island, following the vessel with my eyes.

Well, when I had walked the whole three miles that intervened, to the easternmost spur of the island, and had no longer the eagerness of trying to reach a fixed goal to divert me, then was the mockery of the sea like to have driven me mad; for the tiny waves came dancing in prettily, and raced each its brief course over the sands of the beach, with a gentle, happy whispering that was clearly a playfulness and sport; and all sparkling and bright with the morning sunlight. Afar off from the brig came they in thus, and the whole sound was alive with

little chopping waves, leaping, as trout do at sundown, for sheer delight.

When I had sat me down to watch the brig, why, I could not remain seated, but must needs spring up again and pace up and down the shore, and even wade out into the water — and curse each dancing drop of it, that I could not tread it firmly like the earth, and so follow on and on and on, after the vessel.

Now here was this slow torture working upon me for all the day, since there was a light head wind for the brig to head up into, and the channel tortuous and treacherous and to be made not under full sail. So she were beating back and forth and not yet wholly out of sight by sundown ; and darkness shut her out from me while her topsails were showing against the evening sky.

Then it came over me suddenly that I was famishing and faint from hunger, and thirsty, too, as never before. However, I was not long in quenching this, for there was no lack of little springs all about the island, and I soon came upon one.

After drinking, I went and picked up some mussels along the shore, and ate them raw, ravenously ; so that shortly I was seized with dreadful pains, and sweated with the agony of them, and fell down, miserable and exceeding ill.

Yet withal, being relieved somewhat after a time, I fell asleep a way up from the beach under a pitch of the bank, and awoke not until sometime the next day, when I was slow in coming to my senses, being very weak and feverish.

How I spent the best part of this next day I know not; only I recall I had still in mind a vague, uncertain dread of facing the comrades I had brought to such a frightful pass. Then there is a half-memory of hearing them, toward twilight, calling for me; and of my running away and hiding myself in the woods back from the shore; then of a dull drowsiness falling upon me and I going off to sleep, but half-conscious of being taken up in some one's arms and being carried, it seemed, for hours and hours, and for endless miles. Which was, in truth, stout Will Endicott bearing me all the way back to camp at the eastern shore of the harbour.

Well, it seems, I fell into a grievous fever that lasted nearly a week, they having no leeches to fasten upon me. However, I came out of this state abruptly; since, whereas they had seen me one hour lying stupid and drowsy, the next I was wide-eyed and gazing up curiously into their faces. Then it all came back, what had happened, and, with that, somewhat of the same feeling of dread that had led me away from them.

But now I was childish with weakness, and could not bear the agony longer of exile from their comradeship; so that when good Tom Appleton came presently to have a look at me, there were tears in my eyes and I said humbly, and with penitence:

“ Will you be ever forgiving me, Tom? For, oh! but I be sorry for you and the others that are all here now through my contrivance and folly.”

“ Tut, tut, lad! ” cried Tom Appleton, gently, and laying a kindly hand on my arm. “ Will that be what has

driven ye away to hide? Why, 'fore God! we be mostly sorry for you, and no mistaking, since you be the one like to suffer most by our mischance.

"And mind," added he, cunningly, with a small twinkle of the eyes, though not to hit at me in my misfortune, "d'ye not recall I did say I should be on hand and ready to stand by in the hour of need? So here I am, and Will and Elbridge, too, and the sooner you be up and amongst us, why the better for us."

Now this speech put some heart into me, for no man could hear Tom Appleton speak fairly and not put faith in him; and by the morrow was I up again, and by another day beginning to take heed of our affairs.

I found the men had made the best of the situation for the time being, and had brought over from across the creek the ship's canvas and whatever stuff had been left there, and had set us up a habitation on the eastern shore of the harbour.

But now I saw, too, the cruelty of Vane and his men most seriously manifest; for, whereas they had left for us, as though by way of derision, the spades and mattocks to dig for treasure with, they had carried off every axe and hatchet that had been brought ashore; so that we had naught to cut a tree with, except our knives.

But, it would seem, as a measure of concession to the two men they had deserted at the last moment, or for what reason I know not, they had set ashore at the mouth of the harbour on a sand-bar, where Will Endicott had found the stuff, a few bladders of powder and some bags of shot, large and small, and a couple of fowling-pieces; together

with a half-cask of lines and hooks, a cask of cheese, some horn flasks of powder, a bushel of oatmeal, a few bags of dried peas, and a few other odds and ends that I be now out of mind of.

As for these two men whom they had fallen upon and bound and marooned at the very moment of their departure, it seems that Will Endicott and my other two comrades, on coming to their own senses, were of two minds, at finding them there on the shore.

For it was plain, they had been one with the others for deserting us; and so Will Endicott was for choking the very life out of them in his first rage; but, on the other hand, there they lay, companions by fate of our misery. So Will Endicott and the others did at length unbind the two; but were more ready to mock at their despair, and to tell them it were but their just reward for wickedness, than to offer them any comfort.

But, in the end, my comrades were more grateful to these two, after hearing their story and being convinced that they spoke true.

For, in fact, the sailor, Randlett, and Will Cole's man, John Pemberton, had brought this cruelty upon themselves by reason of their defence of us; Will Lewis and Elias and Captain Vane having plotted to murder us four, being enraged at the fool's errand I had started them out on; and Elias, moreover, having his own ends to serve and a revenge to take that would be sweet to him.

As I say, the fellow Randlett having conceived a fancy for Will Endicott, he had stood out stoutly against murder; and Pemberton had sided with him. So, be-

tween the two, they had brought the others to a compromise.

Now, queerly enough — and it be a proof of the consummate villainy of the man — it was Will Lewis who had been most set on doing away with us. And, chiefly, he wished to put Will Endicott out of the way; for, as Will Lewis had said to Captain Vane, “The fellow had escaped him once before.” Which was an offence unpardonable and never to be forgiven, in his eyes.

Well, at this — so I had it from Tom Appleton — Will Endicott sprang up and cried out furiously that here was a rogue that had sought twice to have his life; and that when he did, if ever, fall in with this Will Lewis again, he would wait for no stroke in the dark from him, but would slay him out of hand. Yet I did not think then ever to see him and Will Lewis meet again face to face.

It seems, moreover, that this scheme for our undoing had been hatched some days before; and the expedition beyond the creek were but the working out of it. Nor had these two, Randlett and Pemberton, any inkling that they were to be left, till they were knocked down suddenly just as the party would be about taking to the boats.

Now it comes not all clearly back to me, as to the manner of our contriving the first weeks of our desertion. Nor am I certain that we went soberly about any one thing. For we were in no calm frame of mind to consider what it were best to do, as against the wild impulse of the moment; and we spent a great part of our time wandering along the shores and gazing off seaward.

We even went to a deal of labour in making and

setting up a great mast and lashing it to the top of a pine-tree, at the eastern front of the island, with a strip of the ship's canvas laced to it, for a signal to any craft; which was, indeed, a foolish thing to do, and all to no purpose; only that it gave us employment and kept our minds occupied.

Then, by degrees, coming to look soberly at our situation, we saw there were two main things to set about: to construct some sort of a permanent habitation against the late summer and fall rains, when they should come on; and, after that, to contrive, if possible, some plan of getting clear of the place.

First, however, to get in hand all that would be useful and of necessity to us, we made several trips to both the extremities of the island and fetched back all, or most all, of the stuff we had unearthed from the caches; and particularly the great sack of powder, which we saw we should soon be in need of.

We got, too, an enormous number of knives of every sort, some very long and massy in the blade, cumbrous things for knives, but, being a small approach to axes, of great value to us. Also we got a quantity of kettles and pans and dishes. As for what paltry pieces of eight there were in the two holes, the very sight of the coin turned us sick with loathing and disgust; and we stamped them into the ground.

Now, this being somewhere about the first of June, we having passed the better part of a month on the island already, with Vane and his men, we went about fashioning our cabin very leisurely. We worked at it when we were

in the spirit for it, only, and so were a fortnight or a little more in finishing it. It was, then, only a little better than an Indian's wigwam, having a framework of light poles; but protected against the rain and wind by the spare sails, which Vane and his crew had left to us in their haste.

This having been done, and our powder stored, we found we were wanting a boat, or canoe, of some sort, to get us over to the mainland for hunting, and, perhaps, in time to set out along the sound, if we dared. We should have liked a birch canoe, but had no good bark to make it of, and so set to hunting for a suitable tree out of which to fashion a dugout.

This we got, eventually, away over by the shore of the creek. We got it down and, after many days, hacked out the rough hulk of a boat, and hollowed the inside, Indian fashion, with fire. This boat we brought all the way around from the mouth of the creek, along the northern shore of the island, and so came into our harbour with it, having a care not to go upon the ledges near the entrance.

This boat soon proved most valuable to us; for, having made several trips in it to the mainland, across the sound to the north of us, we found at length a part of the shore to the northeast, some miles eastward of where we had landed with Vane's men to hunt for treasure, which was more habitable than the other. From this we could get back a great way into the country, if we chose, and in the woods of which there was a great abundance of game.

So we should not lack for food — at least, so long as our supply of powder held out; and, indeed, we found a way later to kill small game with bows and arrows, saving

our powder on any hunting trip as a last resource. Then there was ever a plentiful supply of fish of the choicest kinds, to be had for the taking.

But we were for ever craving, like dying men for water, to get clear of the place; and that were for all times the subject of our discussions. Will Endicott and Tom and Elbridge and I were hopeful, when we had got good command of our boat, of some day venturing to sail southward in her and, perhaps, making the port of Charleston, or Bath, or some settlement, where we might be in the way of getting shipment north. But, though they longed as much as we for freedom, John Pemberton and Randlett were fearful of this. It seemed, by their say, that it was like to fare ill with us an the men of Charleston got hands upon us now; since, after Teach's ship had been taken, there were not a few pirates that had escaped to the woods in those parts; and these, being captured, now and again, were taken and hanged summarily by the Carolinians. All of which did, in a measure, disconcert us.

Of our brief voyaging for the time being, in our rude boat, I may say no more now than that it was a blessed relief to us to go exploring in her; to make the circuit of our island, and come home weary, so that we must fall asleep perforce, and not lie awake to think of our troubles.

Mostly, we did venture in upon the mainland in the part of which I have spoken, that being most accessible; for, as to the coast directly across from our harbour and along to the west of that, it was an accursed, swampy, malarial pest-hole; and away to the northwest, setting up into a river that came down through some hills, or

natural dikes, with pestilential marshes on either hand, there was a fearful current driving. And this was ever rushing in or out with great velocity, with the ebb and flow of the tide, and we had no fancy for venturing into it, seeing that it ran at half-tide like the racing of a mountain stream.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SECRET OF THE RHYME

Now I find I am arrived at a great stretch of time that cannot be told of fully, even had I the gift of memory to do that; for I have other events to write of that be branded more deeply in the brain, and I would fain be through with them and ended.

However, I may, after a fashion, sketch it along, setting such warmth of ardour as I can beneath the pages of the brain, so that what be written there in the invisible fluid of the memory may perhaps glow up into sight, like a secret scrawl held to the fire. I do recall, already, two perils that were near to our undoing; and the horror of the second of these may never wholly pass from me, since the menace of a shameful death be a thing not easily forgotten.

Here we were, then, it being sometime the month of June in the year 1719, six men of us abandoned in a strange wilderness, a vast and pathless distance from any settlement, and like to be looked upon with suspicion should we be able to reach any.

THE MONTH OF JUNE, 1719. — We did, as I have said, set about the fashioning of a hut, which we completed;

and, later, undertook the shaping of a boat, which when done, floated us. We were hard put to it, this and the succeeding month, to reconcile ourselves to our lot — could not do any sustained and consecutive labour; but I have seen one or another man throw down the knife he would be using, and stride away, with his teeth clenched and the sweat starting out on his forehead; and we might not see him again till night, or even the next morning, unless it were at a distance, going sullenly along the shore.

THE MONTH OF AUGUST. — We made many trips to the mainland; and, finally, cut and towed back to our harbour, with great labour, two trees. From these we purposed constructing two canoes of a lighter and neater design, to be lashed together with some rigging that had been left with the sails, and to make us a craft similar to the catamaran, to carry a small mast.

We were all the month, as near as memory serves me, constructing this thing, but got it to suit us fairly well. We should have liked a rudder for this, but found we had no means of hanging one, should we make it; and so we made a great sweep to steer with, which rested in a groove of what answered for the stern-rail.

THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER. — We had set us up a smoke-house for the curing of meat, and begun to lay up a stock of the dried flesh. About this time, Randlett and Pemberton made an important discovery, of a number of great turtles on a trip away over to the western extremity of the island. This was most excellent flesh; and I could not but think, had we a cargo of them to take into Boston, what a good price they would fetch in the market; which

did cause me to smile, seeing that I had suffered this reversion from treasure-hunter, aiming at great riches, to my original aim of fisherman.

THE MONTH OF OCTOBER.—I think the middle or latter end, we were for setting out on a cruise to the southward. This was a most uncertain and hazardous undertaking, the land and water being alike wilderness to us; but we had, one might say, no election in the matter, being driven forth by an impulse too strong to be resisted.

Not to hazard all we had, however, we made a division of our powder, and set aside some spare pistols and one fowling-piece, and some other stuff, including the greater part of our utensils for cooking; and we dug a great cache, with exceeding care, and buried all our stuff in it, covering it over with the sail-cloth.

We set up, also, by the shore of our harbour, a staff, with a strip of wood fastened to it, on which Will Endicott carved out, in a whole night's work, the date, as near as we could estimate it, of our setting out; the course we intended to take; who we were, and the manner of our being cast away—all, so that should any chance craft make our harbour those aboard might see fit to come to our rescue.

We embarked then, and made our way gradually to the eastward, finding our course to the southward barred, as we sailed, by immense stretches of the marsh-land, and knowing we were like to come to some thoroughfare, at least by the inner line of the great sand-ramparts that divide the sound from the sea.

So we came at length to the confines of the great swamp

and turned us to the south, where the sound lay not so much as three miles wide from sand to swamp. This was dismal voyaging, the most disheartening, indeed, one might enter upon; for when it would come night, on the one hand there was no firm shore on which to land and eat and sleep; and, on the other hand, where the sand-hills stretched, it was more often so shallow that we must skirt along for a mile or more to find a place fit to land.

However, in one way and another, we made some considerable progress, and got, I should say, as far as fifty or sixty miles southward, where the thoroughfare began to swell out widely into another immense sound, when a condition we had not reckoned on brought us perforce to a halt.

There began to blow up, steadily, by day and by night, a cool northeast wind; and, with it, great masses of fog that loomed up thickly over the crests of the sand-hills, and then poured down over us like a flood risen above its dikes. This did shut us in darkly for days and days, so that there was no venturing on in it.

Therefore, we did at length give over our voyage south and turn about and creep alongshore, making short tacks not to lose our bearings, which were the bars of the sand-slopes. However, there did seem to be a belt where the fog hovered within certain confines, at least at this season of the year, for in time we sailed out of it and saw it lying massed behind us; and we were glad to escape from the dreadful prison and to turn once more into the sound we had first sailed out of.

But here we were, in a few days, like to be wrecked in

sight of our own harbour; for there came in a gale from the east in which our craft was not to be controlled, and we were swept past our harbour and up to the mouth of the river that lay to the northwest, of which I have spoken.

Now this river being narrow, and deep and swift running, did chance to be at the half of its ebb, and swirling down fiercely into the sound. So that when it came to a jousting with the sea, that was thrown up and borne westward by the gale, there was a tumultuous clashing of the two waters, in which chop our catamaran was so wrenched and heaved about that after a time it did work loose and fall apart.

We, clinging to the canoes, must quickly have been beaten off and drowned in the dancing of the chop, but that we were fortunately caught by a back current and carried by the eddy in to a point of the mainland, where we lay all night, shivering; but in the morning, the sound having grown calm again, we managed to swim the two canoes across and got back to the harbour we had left.

This bitter ending to our attempt to escape cost us so dear that we must needs surrender all hope of getting clear of the island by our own efforts before another year; for we had lost all of the powder that we had taken with us, save two bladders of it that we found still tied to one of the canoes after the wreck; and Will Endicott had saved his fowling-piece by slinging it about him when he saw the catamaran was breaking up. And we would hazard no more of our scanty supply on a second venture till the late spring, when there would be no fog and seldom rain.

THE MONTHS OF NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, OF THE

YEAR 1719, AND THE EARLY PART OF 1720.—We saw we must now make preparations for passing the winter here, though it would not, by the word of Randlett and Pember-ton, be severe. So we went to work, strengthening our hut, reinforcing it with stakes and withes, which we daubed with clay. We did even build up a cook-stove of clay and stones, with a chimney of the same, laid over a frame-work of poles and withes.

We did, too, dig deeply at the bed of a spring near by us and make a basin for the water to stand in, so that, if it came on to freeze, we should not lack for water, by keeping the ice broken.

Then, too, we went over to the mainland and spent some days back in the wooded country, hunting. Nor was there ever any serious concern that we should go hungry, for the sea gave us ever a good supply of food.

So it was mostly as to our garments that we were reduced finally to savagery, having in the end to hang the skins of animals about us with the thongs we cut and dried. We were, indeed, like so many barbarians by spring-time, and I should have hidden from Will Endicott had I come upon him, a stranger, in the woods, for, having a sort of doublet fashioned of the skin of a wildcat, and his huge legs swathed in rough skins, like an Indian warrior, he was enough to frighten any one.

THE EARLY SPRING OF 1720.—We were now mostly concerned to make us a better craft for voyaging than we had had before; and we did this, making use of the two canoes we already had, but taking more time and shaping them over better. But we would not make us another sail

till the time should come for using it, since we could not spare it from our hut.

Now we were ready to start out once more southward, by, I should say, the first of June; and should have done so, but that Elbridge Carver fell ill, and we thought him as good as dead for more than once; but he would rally, clinging to life with a gaunt, lean hand when we were fearing he must let go. So that it was not until the first of August, or thereabouts, that we got under way.

We were, moreover, in hopeful spirit over this voyage, seeing that for much of the distance we should be cruising through waters we had once before explored.

We went southward for days, with a good southwest wind, and no delaying from perverse weather. So, in a week of two, we were some eighty miles south of our island, having sailed more than double that number of miles in beating and reaching, and were arrived somewhere a little above a great inlet — it may have been Ocracoke — though pretty well inland.

Here, sighting the mouth of a large river, we steered up into it late of an afternoon, about the first shading of twilight, very hopefully, seeing it was of a depth and breadth so splendidly navigable as to make it probable there would be some town along its banks. But here, all of a moment, we came to an end of our voyaging, sharply and cruelly; and had a fleeting vision of that grim death that all men may dread the most. For, as we went along the northern shore of the entrance to the river, and the evening very warm and pleasant, and the shadows of the overhanging trees and bushes quivering tremulously

with the light breeze, there suddenly shot out from behind a point a long boat, with four men rowing and two men sitting in the stern-sheets.

These two caught up guns from across their knees and blazed away at us, while the four stopped in their rowing and, themselves, seized guns to do likewise. However, being unharmed by the first shots, we threw ourselves flat so that the bullets fired by the four that had been rowing went over our heads and through our sail. At the same moment we heard a cry go up :

“ The pirates ! the pirates ! Halt ye, and give yourselves up or ye be all dead men.”

But being helmsman of our craft, by reason of my days about Eastham, I did lose not a moment in putting us about and heading off from the men ; and, to stay their oncoming — for the four were quickly laying to their oars again — we snatched out our pistols and gave them a volley ; which brought them to a sudden stop.

So, having got before the wind, and enough breeze still stirring to move us, we drew away from them while they were waiting to reload, and gave them, also, two shots from our fowling-pieces, into the bargain.

Whether any of our shots took effect, we had no way of knowing, hearing no loud outcry, but only a storm of rough speech among them. However, they did follow only in a halting way after that, rowing for a few minutes briskly and then stopping to fire. And all the while we were running away as fast as ever we could, praying that the wind might not die down ; and, more especially, when, after a little time, we observed a second boat come quickly

alongside the other, whereupon the two came on together in our wake.

But we caught a strong set of the current northward in a little while and, with it, we being now well out of the mouth of the river, a fresher breeze; so that we were losing no way to them when the night fell.

We were put more in terror by this adventure than though we had been seized by Indians or pirates, seeming to feel the cold shadow of the gibbet with their first outcry, though whether they had taken us for some of Teach's old men, or there were others by this time in hiding about here, with a price set on their heads, there was no telling.

By reason of which, we had now no longer any other wish than to escape back to our island and remain hidden. So we sailed all that night, and were thankful for the gracious breeze that kept the sail filled.

Then, by the morning, we having made fair running of it in the dark, the boats were not anywhere to be seen. Yet we dared not lie by to rest and sleep, but kept on all that day, and were very early started again the next morning.

We saw no more of the men in the boats, which made us think they were king's men from some war'sman, sent to patrol the coast; for these king's men were never fond of going far out of their way, nor seeking to be shot at when it was to be avoided; since there would be better fun afloat.

Within the fortnight we were back upon our island again, and glad to step ashore; but very downcast and gloomy, withal, since we had reckoned strongly on this

venture and would, indeed, have reached some port of ships had we not been mistaken for rovers.

Well, now, the fall being soon upon us, and our condition seeming to be hopeless, we were put to the same old contrivances as before, to winter us; but we went about the work more heavy-hearted, without the incentive we had had the previous year to keep us in good courage.

So that Tom Appleton was no longer buoyant as of old, but sadly sobered; and Will Endicott was now a great hulking giant, with no spirit in him; and the others of us long of face and given less to discourse. Whereby I seem to see that the wild creatures suffer not so much by reason of lack of speech, the depression of the wilderness conduced to silence.

It was sometime the first of the winter, when it had not begun to be cold, but we knew by the flights of the wild birds to our shores that the winter was coming on, that we changed our camp over to the other shore of the harbour; that is, to the western shore, we having found a spot close by the water, but a few rods up from it, that was more sheltered and that had a good spring by it.

Mostly to our advantage, it was nearer to the creek away over to the westward, where we had noticed that there were now great flocks of wild duck; and these were so many and so free from alarm, that we might get scores of them at twilight even with the bow and arrow, and so save our powder.

Later, when the new year had come and gone, and the signs of early spring were on every hand, and the first flights of the wild birds on again, they coming from the

farther south, why, we took them in traps, having no powder to spare.

But now this changing of the site of our hut, which we had done, as I say, the early part of the winter, is a strange thing for me to contemplate, it being a chance impulse at the time, to give us more comfort. Yet it seems the working of Providence was in it; since, had we stayed in the old place, I fear we should all have left our bones on the island, even as the pirate we had found buried in the lonely grave.

This spring of the new year, that of 1721, found us not lean and gaunt, as after the first hard winter on Round House, for we had been well fed and were in good flesh. But we were all growing, I did realize, of a dull vacancy of mind, having lived for the most of two years only as the animals or the savages do, with all of our concern as to what we should put into our mouths, and nothing to stir the brain from growing torpid.

Yet, whereas I had perceived this and was sorry for it, I fell to caring less and less if it were so; and even the grief, of which I had not, and have not now, any words to give expression — only that I do believe there were intervals of time in which I was half-mad with the agony and the hopelessness of it — even this became in time blunted in some measure, wearing itself out, as all things do.

But in this spring, when everything about us was having a new awakening, why, there was the first old restlessness and frenzy at our captivity seizing hold of us again; and, as it came on warmer and the nights mild, there was ever a certain soft invitation in the moonlight

lying over the sound that called to me, in terms so tender as to set me weeping, to venture forth once more across the placid surface and go back to her who was ever waiting.

So that how to make the venture again was a continual torment; and I would spend sometimes the whole of the night alone by the shore, seeming to be nearer to her then, by the peaceful, moonlit sea, than at any other time.

I fancy to this day I can hear good Tom Appleton calling from the hut where he and Will Endicott and the others had lain them down for the night: "Will you not come in, Philip, my man? It will be no good for you out there alone. They do say the moon will make folk queer in the brain by much gazing on it, lonely. Come in and sleep, and we will talk to-morrow of getting away. I think we shall go north on the next venture."

And of my answering, on such a night, in the latter part of the month of April, "Sure, and I will be coming in presently, Tom; but first will I have a turn along the shore, to quiet down in." And so sat me down presently, where I was like to stay half the night or more, and dream that I was not there, but would open my eyes on the hills of Round House.

I have wondered often, what strange magic there be in the moon's light, that it hath ever the effect, which the sun's hath not, of transporting the mind away from the present surroundings to where one has seen it glow softly at other times. Is it winter? Why, one will be presently mindful of how it rose on some hot summer night when he lay at anchor in a still harbour. And lo! the same tune will run through the brain that came out across the

water then from land. Is it summer? There will be a picture quickly coming of a frozen pool, with the same moonlight glinting along the ice.

So I do think I have never sat idly and seen the moon rise, but I have been mindful of other moons and other places; whereas the sun, in its surpassing glory, hath no such wizard power; and mostly, I do think, because it comes up with less of stillness and mystery, even in the lonely places. Since there be, accompanying it, the voices of birds singing joyously, or of men going about the decks, or of vessels weighing anchor, and the rattling of blocks and hoops as the sails are spread, or the stirring of cattle or wild animals, if it be on land — and all of which be lacking by the time the moon be rising.

So here was I, in the flooding light of the first coming of the moon, near a thousand miles from home; and yet the moonlight lay no longer across the waters of the sound, nor along the melancholy shore beyond, nor stealing up the white sands to my feet. But it lighted up now all the woods that fringed the ponds back of Cousin Ephraim's, and I could hear the cattle rouse up and stir sleepily amid the brush.

Now it shone down upon the ghastly gibbet where Quelch's men had gone up to die by the shore of the Charles; and I could see their white faces in the boat as they came up to the foot of the gallows, with Cotton Mather standing like an angel of wrath in the bow; and then — a fearful sight in the yellow light of the moon — six dangling figures, with the weird glare upon the water as it flowed beneath them.

But now this died away, and the moonlight stole through the pines that fronted the sea on Round House. The orb wheeled higher, and the light flooded down into the meadows; and it made the floss, that ran murmuring joyously past our cabin door, sparkle here and there among the alders. And there was one spot, away up the little stream, that lay for a time in shadow, until the moon rose higher. Then, as the soft light stole into that bower by the floss, I saw my Mary waiting, as in the old days, for me to come up along the bank and find her there.

But this was a fleeting vision; and it went out amid the sound of vaster waters, the hoarse roaring of the sea. I stood on the sand-hills of Eastham; and the bodies were tumbling out of their graves and were hurled once more up the banks, and rolled down again; and the faces of the dead stared up at me and faded out, as the seas rose and fell.

The sea and its dead! Now the waves were tossing four score bodies up the steep incline of sand, and now the sea fell away calm, and still, and the storm was gone; and only here and there a body lay floating, quiet and stark, upon its surface, with the moon shining on the face of the dead.

Then, in awesome silence, the steep sand-cliffs of Eastham sank slowly, dissolved, flattened, broadened out, disappeared. The sea contracted; and now the low-lying, familiar shore lay just beyond the stretch of the sound at my feet, and many familiar objects came again into view.

Yet all was not changed, and a part of the vision re-

mained — a pirate body floating on the surface of the gleaming water; heroic in size, bigger, indeed, than big Will Endicott, but the body of a man. No, not the body, either; for now it was more plainly to be seen, and was not, I say, a body, but the mere skeleton of a man, huge and weird.

The little waves cut crisply in between the ribs; murmured in the hollow skull; broke in tiny splashings against the long bones of the legs; and washed over the whole frame, with the gentle swell of the sound; till the skeleton, grisly with clotted seaweed, seemed drifting and rocking, with the easy motion of the waters, borne upon the surface by some unnatural disturbance of the sea.

With this, though I be little afraid of dead men, thinking there be no great power for harm in any of us when the life is out, yet could I feel the top of my head grow cold, and the skin tighten and shrivel till it pained; and I would fain believe I were but half in my senses and half dreaming, with the vision of Eastham not wholly faded away. So I sprang to my feet and spoke aloud to myself, by way of reassurance; and I shut my eyes from the moonlight.

Surely, said I, when I do look again there will be no pirate skeleton there upon the water, to be seen. Yet, withal, there was that inner consciousness which told me that, when I should look again, the thing would still be there.

Still there! ghastly, grotesque, misshapen; too huge for reality, but still before my eyes, the skeleton of a giant man, with the little, fluttering waves making sport of it, as before.

The next moment, I could have laughed at my folly; for it was no longer the bony figure of a man, but only the top of one of the reefs that lay just at the north and west of the entrance to our harbour. And I had seen it a thousand times before, yet here was I growing chilly and creepy over its fancied likeness to the poor bones of a drowned man.

Then, all of a sudden, again, I was getting cold and frightened with the strange significance of the thing, as it played, I know not how, upon some hidden chord of consciousness within me, even before it leaped to life within the brain. So, in another moment, I found myself whispering the words of that queer sailor's doggerel that the man who went up to the gallows had written down those long years back, and of which I seemed to see now the meaning:

“When the skeleton's bones are bare,
When his ribs let in the air,
Sight across from skull to toe—
Weigh the anchor, now, yeave-ho !”

Now I was running back to the camp, where the others were sleeping, soundly. But I had them sharp awake, with a cry, before I had arrived; so that they were sitting up, amazed, when I ran in upon them.

“Why, what will be amiss, man—or is it a sail?” cried Will Endicott, eagerly.

“No! no!” I shouted. “It be the skeleton, Will. Mind you, the skeleton of which the rhyme runs about the treasure. It lies out yonder—the skeleton we be so long hunting.”

"The devil!" exclaimed Will Endicott. I think he thought me touched; and he added, anxiously, "It will be the effect of the moon, I fear." Then he and Tom Appleton looked strangely at each other, and Will Endicott laid a great arm gently over my shoulder.

Now this was downright maddening to me, to be taken for a poor fool, gone silly with moon-gazing; and so, to cut no foolish figure, with antics, I did sober quickly and looked Will Endicott calmly in the face.

"Sure, Will," said I, "I be not touched in the brain, nor have I been dreaming. But I have seen the mark to steer by for the pirate treasure; and it be no real skeleton of bone, as we have been thinking all this while, but a mere jagged cropping of the ledge just out from shore. Come with me, and you shall see for yourself if I be mistaken or not."

So they went back along with me.

Well, when we had arrived at the place where I had stood, why, there was the ugly reef making a fool of me, and like to prove Will Endicott's fears. For, as true as I live, I could see no more a skeleton figure to it than I could a full-rigged ship; having, perhaps, not just the same angle, or distance, as before.

So I was staring like a half-wit, and like to be the mark of all the others, when suddenly Tom Appleton got the thing right.

"Why, there it is, for sure, Will," he cried. "It be, indeed, a great skeleton an you get the light of the moon to play upon it right. Aye, there's the big skull lying in next to shore, and the legs sticking out toward the northwest.

By the Lord ! Philip, how will the rhyme go : ' Sight across from skull to toe,' — sure and we shall fetch just this side of the river that wrecked us.

" Here, Will, do you not see it, man ? " And Tom Appleton drew Will Endicott over and showed him the thing. By and by Will Endicott got it, too, and I and all the others ; but now it was ledge to me one minute and the skeleton the next, and came and went like a phantom.

Then, after a time, as we stood gazing, Will Endicott said grimly :

" Aye, but 'twill not drift away. 'Twill be there tomorrow and the next day, I'll take oath ; and of little good to us now, I fear, though there be treasure a mile high. And I will set out on no night jaunt for all the gold ever hidden, since we shall be no nearer home for the finding of it."

And Will Endicott went back to camp, with the others following.

But, though I did feel the truth of Will Endicott's words, yet was I drawn to the thing mightily ; and I could not leave it, but sat me down again by the shore to gaze upon it. Strange, indeed, was its fascination ; and grievously did it torment me through the night. For, when the resemblance would disappear, then I had no peace till I had seen it again ; and, when I had once more found it, then by weariness of gazing I would lose it. And so, at length, I fell off to sleep by the shore.

Then, when I was awake, once, an hour later, why, for one moment I thought it was all a cruel dream, there

being no skeleton there, nor any ledge at all; but the waters were flowing smoothly over the spot where the reef had shown before the flooding of the tide had covered it.

CHAPTER XXIV

“ FROM SKULL TO TOE ”

BIG Will Endicott had been scornful of the treasure the night before; but he would be as keen as I when it had come daybreak and he had stirred his wits by a dip in the sea. There was never a man so out of temper with the working of the tide as he; for, since it would be yet two hours till the waters would begin to ebb away again, it would be six hours at least, or an hour before noon, before we should get the skeleton fairly in sight once more.

So Will Endicott was for setting off on the venture, as soon as we had eaten, which would be four hours before noon, and, having the general lay of the land, hunt the place out. But Tom Appleton was wiser, having now the control that Will Endicott had had the night before; and he declared we should go again on no fool's errand, but by the truest course we could lay, by sighting according to the rhyme.

Now why we should be, all of us, once more afire with the zeal of treasure-hunting, considering our situation, is beyond me to say; unless it be that we had none of us lost heart of being quit of this place some day, and thinking we might come again in due time and fetch the stuff away.

But, at all events, it was the thing we had started out to find; and now that there seemed fair prospect of our reaching the goal, why, here we were so eager, after these years of waiting, that we could scarce give the tide so much as a half-dozen turnings of the glass to do the rest of its flooding and its ebbing in.

"Hold your patience, Will," cried Tom Appleton to Will Endicott. "Will you be walking into Boston by sundown, with a bag of gold under your arm to spend, that you cannot wait a bit?"

"Ah! but I do have an itch to see the stuff," replied Will Endicott; "and, I dare say, when I have set eyes on it, you may pitch it into the sea for all I shall care."

This, I think, was in the minds of all of us. So we fetched up the spades and mattocks and some of the heaviest knives we had, and some of the dried turtle flesh, and loaded up the catamaran with the stuff. Moreover, we got the dugout ready to tow along with us, in case we should need it; and we worked at these preparations furiously, as though the tide was hurrying and spurring us, instead of we having to wait for it.

Well, by two hours before midday we had the top of the reef, that answered for the skull, well out of water; so that the thing, indeed, did appear as though the skeleton had been cast into the sea, shotted by the ankles, as the feet and legs lay more deeply submerged than the head. Before noon the upper part of the skeleton was showing, and the ribs letting in the air, and dripping with the wash of the sound.

Now we got around to the skull, in the dugout, and

looked across to the mainland in line with the length of the whole skeleton; and, sure enough, as Tom Appleton had said, the course was about due northwest and would bring us in upon the shore near to the mouth of the river, in a country that was most forbidding. It was broken up all about with a multitude of little elevations, with swamps lying between; and the shores of the river did rise above the adjacent country, like natural dikes on either side, so that the flowing of it was confined. This gave to it its current, as it was not merged, as are so many of the streams thereabout at their mouths, into the surrounding country.

But now when we were put to it to fix upon some prominence, or some distinguishing thing, at that distance, as a mark to steer by, why, we were at first taken aback, the country being desolate and the distance some two and a half miles. Yet we did observe what seemed to be a clump of tall trees, apparently some way back from shore, standing up bare and gaunt, as though they were now dead. But back of these, they shutting off the view behind them, we saw no thing to get them in line with; that is, till, our boat drifting a way beyond the reef, we saw — what we had had no occasion before to observe — that this was not one clump of trees, but that there were, in fact, three groups, and there was some distance between them. So that when we should get to the shore opposite we could not go wrong, keeping all three groups in line.

We set out, then, about midday, with the shred of sail on the catamaran, and the dugout towing behind; but the wind being exceeding light and dead against us, we

were nearly two hours beating across, having also the last of the ebb tide to contend against, and that served to carry us to the eastward.

Well, when we were across the sound and arrived at the point where we had a near view of the first clump of trees, we saw they were a dozen tall, dead magnolias on a little eminence a mile back from the shore; and the others lay behind them, each group apparently a quarter of a mile, or more, apart. Now here we saw we should have no further use for the larger boat; for there was, in the direction of the first trees, a little, narrow slip of water, oozing down sluggishly between a tangle of grasses and bushes, and we might pass up along in the dugout, but not in any larger craft. So we made the catamaran fast to a great stump and got us all into the dugout and went in, slowly, along the thread of creek.

Though the course of this creek was sinuous, yet was it all of one direction in the main, and tending on in the line of the trees; so we thought we should be going on in the right way. But, after some quarter of a mile, it came all to a sudden ending, so far as any boat might float upon its surface; for it issued out at that point from amid the roots of a dead forest of stunted pine and juniper; and some of these had been uprooted, and a great mass of fibrous tangle was heaved up all about, so that it seemed impassable.

We might well have believed that here was the ending of our search, but that on one hand there was a clearly defined landing, and, moreover, at some time there had been trees cut away, so that there was a trail leading into the bush. Strangely, when we had entered upon it,

we found it following a narrow ridge of land that led by the most gradual and almost imperceptible incline on to higher ground. Which did, indeed, serve to show us we were on a path that had at least been cleared at no remote time by the hand of man.

But it was desperate travelling, for all that; since there had sprung up between the trees, after the time of its being opened, a cruel snarl of wiry vines, densely intertwined; and, in short, we were soon forced to go back to where we had drawn the dugout on shore and fetch back all the knives, in order to cut our way. The mattocks and spades we left until we should need them.

When we had gone along the trail to the first group of trees, we found them to be, as we had thought, dead magnolias. They must once have been very handsome, stately trees; but they were now dry and ugly.

But here we got renewed hope and a zeal for continuing; for there had been trees cut away about these magnolias, for some reason, and the trunks of many lay nearly sunken in the yielding soil, but still discernible. So we gave a shout of triumph and pressed on.

We got in to the second clump in line more easily, there being less undergrowth, and the country all about us opening up freer, with more good footing. But when we had gone on a rod or two from here, through clumps of what looked like our New England alder, we came abruptly to the shore of a clear, inland pond, with a sandy shore — not boggy — and it was quite symmetrical and pretty, being almost a perfect circle, and a mile across in any direction.

There, a little more than a quarter of a mile away, was

a dainty island of exceeding beauty, having clean, regular shores, with a fringe of evergreens lining the border of the sand, and the land rising prettily all around to the centre of it, whereon stood the third clump of magnolias. This island was, we judged, only a few rods across.

This water, however, brought us up short. We liked not to swim the pool, for fear of poisonous reptiles that might be lurking; so we were forced to turn about and go all the way back to where we had left the dugout, with the tools, and fetch it along; which was the hardest task for no greater distance that we had ever accomplished.

However, we were across the pond in a few sweeps of the paddles, being now very eager, despite our weariness, believing we had come to the end of our searching; and we were out of the canoe before it had touched shore, and barely waited to ground it against its drifting before we were running up the bank amid the trees.

Now we had, in truth, come upon the goal for which we had sailed the great seas clear from Round House, and of which I had dreamed all these years since Ephraim and Mercy and I had first gazed upon the pirate's scrawl; nor was there any need of a searching for hidden signs — but the sight that met our eyes was astounding.

Within the circle made by a rim of the great trees was a space some two rods wide in either direction; and it was all dug over from one end to the other, and great holes sunken here, and mounds heaved up there; so that there was not a square foot of it that had not been touched.

There never was a more heartrending, maddening sight for men eager for treasure and come at last, quivering,

to the very foot of the rainbow. There, before our eyes, were no fewer than six great chests, that had been banded and bound with iron; and which had been digged up out of the earth, smashed open, and emptied. There were three casks, heavily hooped, with the heads knocked in, half-filled with rain-water. There were half a score, or more, of canvas sacks, tarred, and now rotting to pieces, but still partly preserved by reason of this coating; and these had been slit open, as though their contents — we could only imagine the precious stuff they had contained — had been emptied into more convenient vessels that the party that had discovered them had fetched along.

There were spades and mattocks and three axes lying where they had been dropped by those that had found the treasure. These were mostly rusted out of their handles, but the blades of the axes were good. The spades were eaten through with rust. And these three axe-blades, which would be very serviceable, yea, precious, to us, were the treasure that was left to us of what we had come so far to find.

Then, while we stood, stupefied, dumfounded, stricken all helpless, and the tears rolling down our cheeks from sheer chagrin, Tom Appleton did solemnly, alone of us, gather up these three rusted axe-blades. He held them up and declared, with well-simulated exultation, that they were the most priceless treasures we could have found; and this absurdity of all absurdities was indeed too much for us, seeing we might have got better ones cheaper in Boston, and need not have come so far for them; and it set us off into a fit of hysterical laughter — which was the mirth, without merriment, of so many fools.

In the next moment we were overcome once more with the reaction of disgust and chagrin; and Will Endicott was put out with Tom Appleton and bade him make not so light of our discomfiture, and to throw the rusty blades away, seeing we should have no use now for them — nor for anything else, but might as well lie down here and starve as to die of dry-rot over on our island, like savages.

However, Tom Appleton was cooler in the matter; and he hung the axe-blades about him, and bade Will Endicott be of better cheer — which, indeed, Will Endicott was, right soon; though we all of us had no heart for anything but to sit us down and gaze helplessly at the spot where the treasure had been. Alas! it was dug over now, like a potato patch; and we could only wonder what had become of the stuff.

We could have but little doubt that black Teach had come by it in some manner, and that he and a crew had entered here and sacked it away. We thought it like enough that some of Brandt's old men had had the secret from him, or from Scudamore, and had, later, sailed under Teach, or given, again, the secret to some one that did. As for its being Teach, why the fact that Vane and Will Lewis had found the traces of him in the other cache made us certain enough of that from the first.

So here we were, men that should have been wiser, brooding and despondent over a few heaps of mouldering earth that were as great a treasure to men in our condition as gold would be; and we might as well have filled our sacks with that and be content.

Presently the night began to fall about us, we having

been so long in getting access to the spot. We deemed it best, then, to make no effort to get out to the shore until morning, the trail being so bad and the dugout heavy to carry; and we leaned us back each against a tree-trunk and thought to go off to sleep. But, with the night, there came in out of the swamps and across the pond a myriad of stinging insects, so that the sound of them filled all the air like a crying wind; and we could sit no longer still, lest we be stung even to death.

We shoved off in the canoe, then, and, finding there was far greater relief from the pests on the water, where a little wind was blowing, we lay off and on there for several hours, and waited till the moon had risen, that we might go back along the trail more easily.

Then, on the way out, between the first group of magnolias and the shore, we came upon a sight that would have caused us grievous work to no purpose had we espied it on the way in. This was a grim reminder that a man as heartless as Teach had been there; for we saw, a little to one side of the trail, in a spot where there was a small hummock, the skeletons of four men. These, by holes in their skulls, had been shot treacherously when the treasure had been brought most of the way out, and no further need of them.

When we had got, at last, to the shore where we had moored the catamaran, it was long past midnight, so hard had it been to carry out the canoe, and we dragging ourselves along wearily. We made what haste we could to get under way, being eager to be back again to camp, nor reckoned that the wind had fallen off very sluggish, nor of

the tide, which would be near to two hours upon its flood ; and there was good Tom Appleton hugging the only treasure we had to show for our quest, the three axe-blades slung about him, and we little knowing how soon we should put them to use, and how strangely.

For, being clear of the land and out some way from the point, we came all at once into the swift run of the current bearing on to the mouth of the river ; and being drowsy and the waters all blended by the moonlight flickering through drifting clouds, we had forgot and had not observed that it was at the height and power of its running. Then the wind failing to overcome it, we saw presently we were making no headway toward the other shore, but were, instead, being carried rapidly back and even into the very mouth of the river.

There was no escape now, for the wind did not suffice to bear us out of the current ; so that we were going swiftly along with it, and were well up into the river almost before we knew what had happened. So it seemed best only to keep headed straight amid it, and let it carry us in that way for the present, since, at this stage of the tide, there was such an incline of the waters, pouring from the sound into this narrow channel, that we were in the rapids and tide-rips, with little, snappy waves slapping us ; and, to swing the craft now, would likely bring us broadside so that the current might flood over us.

In this fashion we were borne inland for something like a mile, when all at once the river made a quick bend away to the westward, between narrow shores, and here was a whirlpool made by the current and the eddy. This swung

us completely about, so that, in trying to put us right again, and being met by a great rush of water, the sweep by which I did steer was jammed and broken short off a little way above the blade.

Thence we went along hazardously, as we thought, with no guidance of our own; but truly now we were coming to an end of our long, misguided wanderings, being borne onward by the Hand that doth direct all men to their goal, and most often through the strait and narrow way. So it mattered naught to us clinging to the boat that we were flung now toward one shore and then to the other, and we much afraid of the ending. It mattered at the heart of the thing naught that we saw but vaguely and in blended shadow the banks along which we ran, the moon being much obscured by cloudiness; seeing that what was written now upon the face of these swift waters was no scrawl for the eye of man to read, but beyond all scrutiny, the workings and the plan of higher things.

Then, quickly, when we had been taken inland in all the matter of at least three miles, there rose up in our path something huge and black, undefinable in the darkness, but lying across the whole breadth of the narrow stream; and, as we were borne down upon it, the roar and rush of the waters grew louder, so that we cried out in sharp agony, fearing we had come all so suddenly upon the brink of rapids, and that there might be great falls lying soon beyond.

But we were not long doubtful, and only one way left to us; since we ran down, the next moment, upon a great tree that had been uprooted and stretched its mighty

trunk from shore to shore across the waters; and they, sweeping under it and beating against it in their passing, did cause the rushing sound that we had heard.

Now there was no time given us for thought; but only could we leap, one and all, as our boat darted down to the swift sloping of the water where it was sucked under the great body of the tree. We could but leap amid the branches of the tree that protruded from the stream, and cling there; and thank God we had gone over no falls, but were safe, and might go ashore easily in a little while, at the slack of the tide.

CHAPTER XXV

THE TREASURE AT LAST

NOR were we in any serious discomfort, finding places to sit among the branches, above the rising of the water, so that we stayed there through the rest of the night; and by five o'clock the stream was flowing in more gently, it having only two hours more to the end of the flood, and its fury already spent.

Then we saw, as the morning came in, what was an accounting for the sudden madness of the stream. Through the forest, perhaps a hundred yards away, there gleamed the surface of a little inland lake, or pool; and we should have ridden soon at peace within its rim had we not brought up on the fallen tree. And it would be the emptying out and refilling of this pool at every tide that caused the disturbance of the stream, it having much to accomplish between tides, and must run and flow with great zeal.

But now were we sorely puzzled to know what it were best to do, seeing that our catamaran had been broken up; but we found that our canoe, which had been towing after, was driven in like a wedge between two branches of the tree, and we set about working that out.

Well, here all at once, as we were going cautiously along the boughs of the tree, and had hold of the dugout and

were trying to force it loose, there was Tom Appleton springing up, clutching at a branch overhead for support, and glaring off toward the pool. He gave a gasp, like a man hurt; and then he sat down, almost collapsed, on the bough; and he rubbed his eyes as a man aroused from sleep, and brought from out a dream.

“What be the matter, Tom Appleton?” I cried, and climbed alongside and held him by an arm; for the man was as white as the sail-cloth on a maiden ship, and shaking.

“Oh!” he said, all choking. “Oh! oh!” And he held a hand to his side.

“Why, there be nothing,” he said, presently, and pulled himself painfully to his feet; and when I helped him I could see the great drops ooze out across his temples, and he was wet through with sweat. “I—I had a vision,” he gasped; “just a sudden turn—a whirl of the brain—and I had one once the second time I went aloft, and all but went into the sea. I be right again now. It’s over. Don’t mind, Will (Will Endicott had made his way over to us). Let us come on for the boat again.”

So we took hold of the dugout once more, Will Endicott and Tom Appleton on one side, and the man Randlett and I on the other, we being the four strongest. But here again was Tom Appleton gone clean daft, this time for certain (so I was thinking), for he gave out a screech that chilled the blood in me; and he stood up again, clutching at the branch overhead, shading his eyes against the sunlight with the other hand. Then he was pointing out through the branches beyond, toward the pool.

“Look! look!” cried he. “Will—Philip—Elbridge

— what will you make of it? D'ye see yonder, where the birds hover, and some sit all perched, and some be fluttering? Oh, God! What will that be they light on? I think I do not see aright, and it be some trick of the eyes."

Now we saw, indeed, where the sea-gulls were hovering — and their screams had been in our ears since the break of day. For with the run of fish swept in by each tide there would be good feeding in the pool; and now they were swooping above the tree-tops by the shore; and many skimming the pool; and there, where Tom Appleton pointed, was a long line of them, perched uneasily, as the sea-gulls do when they alight ashore, with wings spreading, the birds fluttering up a little and settling again, and screaming all the while in their wild way.

Then Tom Appleton — for he could say no more, being husky in the throat — did take from his belt the pistol that hung there, and, pointing it in the direction of the birds, fired.

Up rose the sea-birds, screaming, in a great white cloud; so vast a number, it was like a fleeting whiff of the sea-fog. Bare were the branches whereon they had perched, fluttering. Bare was the great shining stick Tom Appleton had seen, and to which he pointed — and he shouting hoarsely now, bawling, howling exultantly.

Oh, the wonder, the madness, the marvel of it! A long, rounded, gleaming stick, lying horizontal amid the tree-branches for the birds to perch on — and where men had perched, clinging to rope and tarry rigging, and had furled and spread the great sail to the breeze; with the decks reeling beneath them, and the seas rolling all about.

The topsail yard of a vessel!

Now we made out the standing rigging, the shrouds running down; and, though we could not see it, there must be the mast behind the tree-trunks, and the hull, hidden by the growth that lay between.

Oh! for a bit of the good, firm earth under our feet, that we might fling our arms about one another; that we might seize upon good Tom Appleton; hug him; beat him; choke him with wild embracings; roll upon the earth; be madmen for a brief moment!

Ah! but you should have seen big Will Endicott. There was the strength of four men in him at the moment when he seized upon the canoe and tore it free from its bondage with a mighty wrench. You should have seen him drag it up along the tree-trunk, and all of us lay violent, mad hands upon it and lift it over the tree and set it down on the other side. And there were two broken, rough-hewn pieces of the flooring of the catamaran to use for paddles, the paddles being gone; and we were aboard the canoe and going in a frenzied way along the now quiet stream, toward the head of it, where it widened into the pool.

There we came upon the vessel quickly. It was lying snug in a little bight of the pool, near the entrance; and we could see the anchor chains forward and over the stern, for they had made her fast, whoever had left her there, not to be drifting in any tempest.

When we had approached nearer, we saw there was, also, a sheet-cable run out from the waist to the shore and made fast there, linked about the trunk of a tree. So there was

never a vessel lying so snug and yet hampered at the same time with so much cable.

“Hooray!” yelled Tom Appleton, as we ran up close. “She be not, as I did fear, old and rotten. Those be good spars, and I’ll take oath the hull be sound. ‘Tis fairly clean and as good as new above water, though she will be foul enough below, I dare say. Now to get in her, and see if any sails be stored and not spoiled; else I know not how we may dare move her, our own being no more fit to spread, even in a sundown breeze.”

So we tossed an end of light line, that was fastened to the canoe, around the mainmast shrouds, and brought it down and sent Elbridge Carver up on to the channel by it, he being the lightest of us. He got over the bulwark there and went to look for a rope to lower to us; but such as lay about on deck had gone rotten; and the forecastle, and the cabin and carpenter’s galley were fastened up tight. So we were forced to go around to the bows and climb up that way by the chains.

This craft we found to be a little ketch, of some fifty tons burden; not so full in the beam as most of them, and the mainmast set slightly forward of amidships; and the forecastle, which had both the berths for the crew and the cook’s and carpenter’s galleys under its cover, being very large, the great space of deck between the mainmast and the bows allowing for it.

“And what will you make of her, Tom Appleton?” I asked, as we scrambled on deck, and the sea-birds went up, clamorous, all about us.

“Why, that I may know no more than you,” he replied;

“at least, till we have overhauled her. She may be anything — pirate or trader. Yet these craft, by the cut of them, will ever look uncertain to me.”

We made effort, first, to get access to the carpenter’s galley, thinking the sails would be there, like enough. This turned out to be no easy matter, and tried our patience; for we found the door fastened up exceeding tight, with a great lock clasped into a heavy staple, as were all the doors and hatches, everywhere, sealed up most securely. So had Tom Appleton not brought along the axe-blades, still slung about him, it must have taken us a tedious while to cut our way in, with the knives we had.

But we found two capstan bars and cut these to fit as handles to two of the axes, and so smashed away the lock to the galley quickly and got entrance. Well, here was prize enough to have set marooned men mad with joy, for the store of good tools and iron and casks of nails and sound cordage that first met our gaze. This last was most important, seeing as the braces and stays and lifts that had been left on the ketch were, some of them, very much frayed and rotting, and needed renewing.

Yet, here was greater joy to our hearts; for at the farther end of the galley, neatly and carefully packed in above the floor and wrapped all about most snugly with heavy tarpaulin, against the moisture and the rats, were the sails. These, too, had been little worn; indeed, had been almost new when put away; though they were yellow now from being stowed beyond the bleaching of the sunlight.

Now we were dancing, like men bewitched, about the

decks, when we had dragged out the heavy canvas and found it good. For no treasure could equal this. Here was the sea opening up once more its pathways to us; and Boston and Round House brought so near that I could look just beyond the bulwarks of the ketch and see them both lying off across the pool.

By this time, it being well into the morning, and we having eaten nothing since the evening before, we were, one and all, very keen for food. Yet we knew not where to get any — thinking the stores aboard, if any were left, must be spoiled — except we should go ashore and kill some live thing. This we were loth to do, for eagerness to overhaul the ketch and see what might be stored in her. So we were wondering whether to do the one thing or the other, when Tom Appleton, being hard-headed, set us right about the matter.

“For,” said he, “in the first place, this ketch should be, of itself, enough for men in our plight to get and be thankful for; since it were better to find a boat with not an ounce of treasure aboard her than to find a great heap of buried gold and no boat to carry it and us away in. Here have we been two long years waiting; and shall we not be able now to wait only an hour longer at the most? ’Twill be a long day and more we shall be hunting through this vessel — and, besides, do we find nothing, why, we shall be better consoled on full bellies than craving ones.”

“Right, I say,” said Elbridge Carver; “since I, for one, be sick of running pell-mell on false scents and barking at empty holes in the ground, after the hurrying.”

So, all being agreeable, we went back into the carpenter's galley and fetched out a small bar of steel; and with that we pried out the staple and got into the cook's galley, to see whether we could stew a fowl there when we had shot one. Well, here was better luck than we had bargained for. We came upon two casks, one of which had contained a kind of corn flour; and this had moulded and been fouled by rats; but in the other cask was a great quantity of oatmeal, the upper half of which was not good to look at, though starving men might have eaten it. But we threw it out and got a quantity at the bottom that was fairly good and wholesome.

With this, there was also a small rundlet that had once contained about three gallons of light wine, and had now about two quarts. We needed no more to stay us; and by soaking the dry oatmeal in a little wine poured into a pan, we managed to eat it that way.

This, indeed, was a strange thing, and stirred us greatly: to sit down, after our long solitude, in a place where other men had come and gone; and, though by fair presumption, it had been a place of cursing and evil ways, and the whole ketch given likely to blows and drinking, why, it gave me, I swear, a choky, shaky feeling to use the stuff and think that other men had done so before me.

However, we were through quickly enough, though we had vowed we were done with haste and frenzy. And we made a rush for the carpenter's galley and grabbed up, each of us, the best tool we could find to slash and batter with. Then we dashed across the deck and scrambled aft, and ran up the companion-ladders on either side,

leading to the quarter-deck, as though we had just laid the ketch aboard and would be presently hand-to-hand with the captain and officers swarming up out of the cabin to meet us.

Indeed, Will Endicott did look like the very devil of a pirate, he carrying a cooper's broadaxe, and brandishing it as he ran. With this, he being the first to descend the companionway to the cabin, he battered the two small doors in with two blows, so that they flew open on their hinges and we poured into the cabin; but the air was very foul, and we could not stay till we had got two of the dead-lights open and freshened it.

Oh! but here was the stuff we had so long hunted for. Here was Jack Brandt's "yellow money." Aye, and piled high. Though this ship was years after his time, and was launched, I should say, long after he was — by the men of Boston — in mid-air. For all about us, on every hand, were the sacks heaped up against the walls of the cabin, even as so much merchandise on a drover. Will Endicott hit one of these sacks a blow, like a butcher, with the broadaxe; and the keen blade cut the canvas asunder and went clinking into the metal, and golden, tarnished money dripped out of the wound, like blood.

Here it was at last! a sight to make the brain whirl; to clean bewitch one; to make a man feel like rolling in it. Big Will Endicott did seize a great handful of the stuff and sent it flying broadcast all about the cabin, as a man sowing wheat in a field; and then he sat him down on some bags of it, and laughed like a schoolboy that has played a trick. The next, we were all tumbling over one

another, rushing this way and that to see what we could discover.

Tom Appleton and I got, first, into what had been the captain's room, which was to starboard, off this main cabin. It was larger than any other, and had two big deadlights in the bulkhead that looked out upon the deck, so he inside might see what was going on forward. In here we came upon three great chests, like those we had found ashore; and these were treasure-filled, so that I had never imagined the like, nor ever shall see again.

In one there was an enormous number of precious gems of many kinds, more than I knew the names of, and they had been forced from their settings and lay all loose. The other men, excepting Elbridge Carver, knew what they were and that they were of exceeding value, especially those stones, of which there were about three score, which they said were rubies and of excellent quality. Also there were a great number of diamonds; and also there were many sapphires and some turquoises; a small box, or casket, of pearls, and a few emeralds, but these of large size and wonderful brilliancy.

Another of these caskets was heaped promiscuously, in a confused mess, with a vast number of gold and silver trinkets and ornaments, many of them elegantly wrought, such as sword-handles, and gold and silver coat buttons, and neck-chains, and brooches, and strands of heavy gold braid.

The other cask had gold and silver things, mostly watches and their chains, and, often, ornaments depending from these.

Here in this cabin were, all about, the tokens of the man that had owned this stuff, by right of murder and pillage — and that man was Edward Teach; for he had a great variety of weapons, curiously wrought and cunningly and richly ornamented. But he mostly loved, as I had seen before, the sight of the letter “T” on handles of knives and poniards and the hilts of swords, and pistol stocks. We found, hanging on the walls, near a dozen of these things, each with the letter inlaid in gold, or precious stones; and there was one dagger, very long and cruel in the blade, with a gold handle that had the “T” set into it of blood-red rubies, and was the most marvellous weapon that ever a man bore.

There were also in the main cabin and in the mates’ rooms, and even in a small cook-room that may have been for Teach’s own servant, a great many bags of gold-dust to the value of many thousand pounds sterling; a lot of English crown pieces; Spanish and other foreign coins; small arms, several brass blunderbusses, swords and belts and such things.

In all, there was, as we reckoned later, the value of some sixty thousand pounds sterling for each and every man of us; which we should, indeed, never have got by the sale of fish, even could we have sold all that came to our nets, including those caught a week and a day back.

This, moreover, is reckoning without what we found in the hold. There, we got a great number of bales of fine English broadcloth, and raw silks and intricately patterned carpets, woven by hand, and other such goods, not greatly damaged; besides some puncheons of rum;

several hogsheads of sugar; casks of good oil and vinegar; and, best of all, about a dozen casks of Aberdyne cod, still good, being carefully salted and packed.

Now, having found two ship's boats on deck, and these not leaking very badly after we had hung them overboard for half a day and swelled the seams, we got ashore comfortably and found us a spring of sweet water. So, with our fishing and the stuff aboard, we managed to get along without going back to camp until we had pumped out what little water there was in the ketch, and rigged her a little, and got the mainsail on her, and one of the jibs, so we could work her.

By the end of a week or ten days, at the beginning of an ebb tide, and after we had spent a weary half-day in chopping out the great tree that lay across the stream, we got the ketch under sail and went down-stream in her. Which was the most marvellous sail, to our minds, that we or any other men had ever taken.

We came, at length, without mishap, into the sound; and thence, of an afternoon, across it and into our own harbour. The ketch went very sluggishly, for the foulness of her bottom, she having gathered much seaweed and barnacles; but we cared not, and were the maddest men that ever sailed a ship. And we gave a broadside from two of the ketch's big guns, as she brought up, to let the wild fowl and the foxes and all other creatures upon our island know that we had come into our own.

CHAPTER XXVI

ONCE MORE ON ROUND HOUSE

THE ketch had been Teach's. There was proof enough of that. But why it had been so packed with treasure and hidden up the stream in the pool, no man could say. We thought it had been left there, like enough, some time in the year Teach had been killed, or not long before, because it was quite a new vessel, and still in very fair condition. It was known, Teach had had many hiding-places hereabouts, though neither Pemberton nor Randlett had heard of this one. Not that that argued against this having been Teach's vessel, for they had been much on a prize with Will Cole.

It seemed to us as though Teach had had a mind to wind up the business of pirating shortly, having this great store put by to live snug with; but had made one more venture, to his undoing; by which we were now come into possession of both his treasure and Jack Brandt's also, which in some way he had got the key to and had dug up, before us.

Now we found we must contrive some manner of cleaning our vessel, seeing she were so sluggish; but we dared not careen her on the beach, because of the great burden of stuff in her, and we had no zeal for getting the

cargo out and inboard again, ours being all for making her ready and getting away.

We managed better, finally, by setting up a slight framework of poles, freshly cut, in the fashion of a pier, and bracing this in against the shore. We brought the ketch in alongside this on a spring tide and let her lie nearly upright, with only a gentle list to larboard, which would be heeling in toward the log pier; and, against her shifting and careening outward, we made her fast by the main and mizzen to some trees up the bank, with rigging.

When we came to examine the bottom of the ketch, we wondered that we had even brought it so far without greater sail; for the whole of the planking below the water-line was overgrown with some sort of seaweed, and encrusted deep under this tangle with barnacles and other shell-fish. This being scraped away, there was, most fortunately, but little of the planking that must be cut out and replaced; and we were, indeed, surprised that these were not more wormy.

Then, since she bore no name, the one she had got by honest christening having been painted out by the pirates, we gave her the name of the little craft we had lost, *The Venture*; and, having a cleverness that way, I lettered it on the stern, myself, so that we were very proud of it, and I most of all.

It was, then, as near as one may guess, toward the end of May, sometime, when we were rigged over and ready to sail. But here, I have forgotten thus far to mention what was a very great providence, for certain; since we had found in Teach's cabin a chart of all these waters 'round

about the sounds of the Carolinas, and quite clearly defined as to our course from the harbour wherein we lay, out to the inlet. With this, there was a great number of charts, some of them roughly drawn, but with tolerably good sailing directions, of the coasts even as far north as the Penobscot River in the province of Maine. So we should not sail blindly; and, moreover, the man Randlett had made many voyages from the Spanish islands northward, and his advice would profit us.

As I say, by the passing out of May, we were ready for the voyage; and, of a morning very early, with the first of the ebb, we went gliding out of the harbour, feeling strangely like men come all newly to life from some weird burial, and seeing, first, the mouth of the golden river shut out and then the harbour entrance; and so, with gentle running, under easy sail, the familiar places grow faint — settling down lower and lower, till all the island blended into the sound and faded away, like a dream vanished with the coming of morn and sunlight.

Then, even as this island faded — not without some, strange sadness tingeing our joy, and not to be accounted for by me, since we were so glad to be quit of it — there sprang up, faintly, in its place, far, far ahead across the waters, the dim outlines of another; so distant, we should never reach it; so near, we were already under its lee; so strange, it had never existed and was all fancy; so clear and distinct, I could see every shining stream and brook running down to the sea amid the green; so full of dear hope for me, that I was thankful to God, out of great abundance of joy, and singing a song deep down

in my heart that could not be uttered in the sound of men.

So we went along and were cleared at length of the inlet; and the great sea welcomed us with a roaring all along the dreary miles of sand-dunes; and this, and the slatting of the sails, and the discrepancy of the rigging, as we turned us northward and rose and fell in the heaving of the long waves, — all, all was music to our ears.

This were a better voyage, too, than the one we had made coming south; for the season was settled and the winds amiable and mostly from the southward, and so were fair for us. Thus we went free for days and days, the *Venture* proving very fast, now she were clean, and a better boat than the one we had once built in Boston.

Moreover, we were no longer wild men, clad in skins and what-not; but we had found us very handsome suits aboard, and had each and all fine weapons, and pistols in our belts when we chose. Big Will Endicott, having a pleasing vanity, was fond of wearing the marvellous dagger that Tom Appleton and I had found in Teach's cabin. It was, indeed, a fearful weapon in the hands of one so powerful; and, when Will Endicott had it in his belt, with the gold handle showing gaudily, and the blood-red rubies shining therein, why, he would swear he was Teach come to life again, and we were his own sea-dogs.

We saw few sail, save what we took to be two fishing craft, somewhere off our own coast of Massachusetts, in the neighbourhood of what we thought would be Cape Ann; but we were not sure of this land, and kept away more to sea when we had sighted it.

Having sailed this way only once before, and that with no thought of guidance of our vessel, but being driven, helpless, we must have gone very blindly now, and been put, perhaps, to weeks of searching for the island of Round House, despite such charts as we had, were it not that Randlett was fairly clear as to the way. He had been along here with Will Cole twice at least, and once to the very island — and, in fact, had been one of those that fought us at the stockade.

Randlett, it seems, knew of a small isle, or rock, a few miles from the mainland and some nine miles southwest of Round House, where Will Cole's ketch had laid up for several days, awaiting a favourable time to run over and surprise the men of the island. This rock — for it were little more than that, being not beyond an eighth of a mile in length and a few rods wide — we came up to one evening, standing off and on some miles till that time, lest by chance we might be made out with a glass from Round House.

Though it was small, there was good and safe anchorage there, it being in the shape of a crescent, as much as anything, with a shallow bight to lie in, on the landward side, and the outer curve of the rock breaking the brunt of the waves from sea.

Here, lying snug for all the next day, it being clear and bright, we could see Round House looming up very fairly; and, with our own ship's glass, we sighted a little sail in the reach toward afternoon, with figures of men in the boat; though how many, was not plain.

Through that night and two succeeding days and nights,

we must wait, with sails snugly furled and none of us stirring, even upon the rock; since it was clear weather and the nights starlit, and the moon rising early, beginning to full, and, withal, the wind too light after sundown to serve us.

For it were plain, we could not go boldly in upon the men of the stockade; because, were the most of them not gone away cruising, they must outnumber us. And, had Vane taken again to piracy, as he had promised, there might be a whole ship's crew ashore.

However, we saw, in a day or two, the sky overcasting in a way to suit our adventure, mottling all over with broken flecks of clouds, so that anything that would be abroad upon it would not be seen at any distance; and the wind not falling away with the sinking of the sun, but holding to a six or seven knot breeze.

We got away, then, soon after twilight, and found the wind and tide very favourable; so that in an hour and a half we were under the lee of Round House and standing on past the reach and along the shore of the smaller island, so as to fetch in near the farther, or northwestern, entrance to the reach — to run in by the back door, one might say. Yet we had no mind to enter, but to lay the ketch off and on while two of us should go ashore and find what we might discover. These two were Will Endicott and I, for he would have none but him go along with me, though Tom Appleton wished to.

We lowered a boat then, shortly, and Will Endicott and I rowed away in her, going in softly, not to rattle the oars in the locks and to do no splashing. First, we entered the

reach and went down along the shore of the little island a way, to see if Vane's vessel were there. We saw it, swinging at anchor, snug in the bight of the island, and no sign of life aboard. So we ventured across the reach, after going back along the same shore we had come, so as to cross away from where there was likelihood of meeting with any of Vane's men.

The sight of the quiet vessel did thrill me through and through, and lifted a cruel fear from me, that perchance they had all sailed away and deserted Round House, save the Bradfords, and Mary Vane would be waiting for me no longer.

We got in upon the shore of Round House not far from where Ezra Bradford's cabin would be — midway between that and our own. And lo! all at once, through the stillness of the night, the sea making but little wash against the shore, there came down to our ears the tinkle and splashing of the little floss, where it tumbled through the ravine and fell from ledge to ledge into the waters of the reach. And Will Endicott knew not why I must stop for a moment and hearken to it, nor that I was quivering as one that hears a loved voice, long silent.

It was about a quarter to nine o'clock when we got to Bradford's door. I knocked softly. The door was not tightly latched, and the light of a dip shone through the crack.

"Who be there?" cried Ezra Bradford; and he was much startled, by his tone, seeing that the men of the stockade mostly left him alone.

"It be Will Endicott and I, Philip Campbell," I

answered; “ and pray come quickly and let us enter; for yours be the first friend’s voice we have heard for two long years, and we be aching to have you by the hand.”

Then a man came running to the door, and a boy following, and a woman peering out from a corner of the room as the door was thrown open; and Ezra Bradford stood there, holding the candlestick up so the light fell on our faces. He was a man amazed, if ever there was one, and might not have trusted his own eyes had his ear not known us before he saw us.

“ It be Philip Campbell’s voice,” he exclaimed, slowly, as one loth to credit what he had heard. “ And, oh! but it be, indeed, you,” he cried, right heartily for him, he being a man sluggish of emotion. “ And great Will Endicott, too. There be too much meat on him for any spirit of the dead. But come ye in. And where will Tom Appleton and the other one be — what were his name? He were a lank man. I trust they be not dead. Why, ye were all dead men, killed in a sea-fight with a Spaniard, by the story of the men up yonder. Pray, what will you eat? And, indeed, I have no liquor to offer, save a bit of raw rum. Go and fetch it, boy.”

Well, now, I will take my oath, Ezra Bradford had never spoken to this length in all his life before, nor was like to again; but the man was sure enough glad to behold us. We drank his liquor for his sake, and not that we wanted it, and we sat us down in his cabin and told him, in a few words, what had befallen us, and how and why we were back on Round House. The last was not all strange news

to him, it seemed, for he had learned somewhat from Mary Vane of how matters stood between us. Moreover, she had left some word at one time with him, knowing he was our friend, in case she should die, or be taken away by the men.

“Ah, yes, lad,” he said, soberly, “she be alive, and as true as woman ever were to man; and yet, I fear you may not be thinking so at the first — and I hate to say it — but she must wed the big man, Elias, that was with you at first, and whom you did beat, I hear, in brave fashion — and glad I was to hear of that.”

“’Tis a lie!” I cried, hotly. “She will wed no man but me. Dare you tell me she, herself, has said it?”

“Softly, man, wait a bit,” answered me Ezra Bradford, unruffled and kindly. “Things have gone as you know not of. Did I not say she would be true to you? For, God knows, the poor young thing sees not what to do, being forced to that or worse, and will have asked me once would God pardon one that should die by her own hand. And she be brave enough for that, but has the Word firm in her mind, the same as I, that the thing be a sin forbidden and to be damned for. So she will be fairly distraught, knowing not which way to turn, and hoping to die before ever the day comes.”

So I learned from Ezra Bradford, that which I had feared and dreamed of often and again; that my Mary would be driven to a marriage, cruel and abhorrent to her, but the alternative were more dreadful; and it were either to go back to Boston as Elias’s wife, whereby Vane

and his crew might have entrance to the city, also, as honest men, through the aid of Elias and his people, or she must go to sea with Vane and his men and take for husband such man as Vane should choose.

At this, I could scarce hold myself in, to stay and listen to it; and knew within me somewhat of that hot-blood madness that drives a man to slay. But Will Endicott bade me wait, and we should find a way to stay this thing from coming to pass.

This situation had come about, it seems, by Vane's having no more hankering for buccaneering. For he had all but gone up to the gallows on the return voyage, being nearly taken in a fight off Delaware; and he was wishing now to end his days in Boston town and no danger of hanging. This, Elias had persuaded him, could be brought about through him — and the price was Mary Vane; and so Vane had sold her.

To make short, there were only a few days now to the wedding; and the men of the stockade would make a great event of it, and they had a rascal among them from the men Vane had shipped on the south of Cuba, who posed as a man that had once taken orders, and had the right to marry. But whether this was so, or an invention of Vane's to put a better face on the deed, none but the two knew. Yet it sufficed for Elias.

Well, all this, which doth take time to set down, were quickly told; and Ezra Bradford was not a man to draw out the telling of it. And I could stay no longer, but would go up near to the stockade, if not into it; not knowing what I could do when I should get there, but being bound

to make the venture. So Will Endicott must bid Ezra Bradford good night, too, not to let me go alone; and we went out, promising to stop at his door on our return.

CHAPTER XXVII

WILL ENDICOTT PAYS A SCORE

THERE were some deep intervals lying here and there in what would be the direct way to the stockade, which was to the southeast, up the hill, from Bradford's cabin ; so it were better and surer to go up along the floss to a point opposite the stockade and then strike across through the woods, even as Mary Vane and I had done one day, never to be forgotten, and many times after that.

Will Endicott and I went up very quickly, so that we were panting when we had come to the edge of the clearing and saw the dark mass of the logs beyond in the open space. We laid us down for a few moments and rested, till, hearing the sound of voices, as of men carousing, and nothing to prevent us, we crept on hands and knees all the way up to the stockade on the side that faced us. We crouched there, making sure there was no one about.

It happened that there being now some twenty odd men in Vane's crew was to our profit, since they were in no fear of attack. Indeed, though we knew it not, they kept but a slack watch at any time these days, and often only a single guard by the great gate, which was not closed

always, even at night; and this man would be more often fuddled with drink than sober.

Hearing no sound at this point, I made a loop in the end of a bit of rope that Ezra Bradford had lent us, slung it over one of the pickets of the palisades, and went up on this rope till I could see over into the inclosure. Then, finding all clear, I climbed over and dropped down to the ground inside, with Will Endicott quickly following.

This inclosure within the four walls of the log palisading was, I should say, something like a hundred feet across the front, and running back on either side say a hundred and fifty, or thereabouts, though not so far on the side opposite us, the ground being irregular; and at the back, the line of the palisades was curving in and out irregularly, there being falling land there.

In this area, which was, therefore, of quite ample proportions, there were five houses now, or, strictly, three cabins and two sheds. One of these latter was a large one, at the rear end of the stockade, and was used as a main storehouse; the other, a smaller shed, was about opposite the place where we had come over the wall, a little toward the front, and only a few rods distant from where we now lay. So we crept along to the shelter of this and waited there awhile.

Now when one had gone forward along the side of this shed and come to the corner of it, going toward the front of the stockade, why, there was the rear of the captain's own house, only a rod away. The other two houses set snug together off about fifty feet diagonally toward the southeastern end of the inclosure; and, the hour of the

night being not much more than half after nine, we could hear loud sounds of voices and laughter and rough shouting, and the bawling of songs such as one may hear — and be ashamed for — in forecastles at sea; and, withal, the noisy scraping of a fiddle — all coming from the two houses where the most of the crew were.

Also, the doors of Vane's house, front and rear, being ajar, it appeared there was gaming going on there in the big room where Elias and I had fought; and, in time, we came to distinguish his and Vane's and Will Lewis's voices, and another's we knew not, but it seems it were Mackay's. They were loud, too, over their play, and Will Lewis cursing the hardest when the play went against him.

Now, this home of Captain Vane's was, as I well knew, made up of three rooms: the front one, facing the reach, where Vane lived, and slept, in a hammock slung across one corner; and two rooms in the rear, one larger, where Robert Mackay and his Cuban wife were lodged, and a smaller, that was Mary Vane's. Knowing which, and being mad with waiting, I was for creeping up to the door and looking within; and I might have done so, and died for it, but that, fortunately, Will Endicott was with me and held me fast, saying we must be careful and patient — as though a man in my straits could well be either.

But, all at once, a strange thing happened to me that is beyond all accounting for, seeing that I had heard no sound of her footsteps, nor of her voice, nor of any rustling, as of a woman's dress; yet, for a moment, could I not move one foot from the ground, nor lift so much as a hand, nor yet breathe save as though I were stifling. It were all as

though I dreamed, yet knew I dreamed, that Mary Vane was there — there only a few feet away, standing within the doorway, but not to be seen by Will Endicott or me. Again, for this brief, strange moment, was it like also unto some visitation of the spirit, such as may come to one; so that I dared not try to utter so much as a sound, lest the visitation — it being not yet so much, even, as a vision — be passed.

But this — and I had never felt the like before, seeing that I was for the moment spellbound — was of only brief duration; and then, ah! there was no mistaking it. I did hear within the doorway a sigh that was almost a sobbing; and, a moment later, Mary Vane stood there, before my eyes, and leaned against the door-post and put a hand to her head very sadly, looking out, as one that sees no thing that be near by, but only doth gaze afar off.

At that, I would not rush forth, lest she know me not at the instant and be terrified; but I called out softly to her, “Mary, Mary, it is I, Philip.” Then I stepped out from the shadow of the shed and went toward her, with arms outstretched; and whispered again, low and very gently, “Mary, Mary, dear one. See, it is I, Philip — and Will Endicott and I be come again, to save you. And oh! will you forgive me, that left you here?”

But she, poor soul, believing me dead these two years, — and, for the matter of that, had dreamed often of such a return as this, and had awakened to find it but a dream, — why, now, she would be thinking this some cruel trick of the brain, and could not trust her own eyes that looked upon me, nor her ears that heard my voice. And she was

all overcome by the strangeness of it, and gave a little cry and sank down on the stoop by the door, and was swooning, and a sorry sight to see.

Then I would have not have stayed me for all of Vane's men; but I ran to her and lifted her in my arms and carried her back to where I had left Will Endicott. Nor would I have him help me, feeling strong enough to bear two such burdens as she. And, in truth, she was light to carry, seeming to me then to have grown more slender, and her face pale with sorrow, and the shock of this sudden meeting.

Yet, in a moment more, when she had opened her eyes and looked into mine, and sat up and leaned against me as I knelt to support her; and, seeing that she knew me now, and her face lighting up with love, that had not died but had grown with the long parting, why, if she had been beautiful, and more than that, to me before, she were a thousand times that now; and there was that deep mystery of gladness and longing in her clear eyes, that no tears could dim, and that no man may know the way to tell of.

So, Will Endicott had the good wit to go and stand on guard by the corner of the shed for the moment, and leave Mary Vane and me to each other; so that I might comfort her, and tell her I would never more depart from off the island without her, and no man should wed her save me, if she were still of that mind — at which she smiled, with a glimmer of the old dancing light in her eyes. So we spake no more of that, nor of anything else, for a sweeter reason.

But the next moment, she were anxious again, seeing no way for us to escape. But I would have her leave that

to me; and she would find me hiding at Ezra Bradford's next day, or, if she could not get there, for interruption by the men, that I would lie at the edge of the clearing by the entrance to the wood-path that led over to the stream, just after sundown.

All this was scarcely said when Will Endicott ran back to say there was the sound of footsteps in the back of Vane's house; upon which, he and I stole quickly around to the rear of the shed. Presently a woman came to the door and called. Mary Vane, in a moment, made answer; and then the wife of Robert Mackay and, after her, Elias, came out and spoke to Mary Vane, and they all went back with her to the house.

From what she, herself, had told me, they kept ever this close watch upon her, so she might never be long absent; and Elias seemed, by his tone, to be reproaching her as they went along. But what was said, we could not hear. They went, one and all, inside, and the door was shut. So, there being nothing more that Will Endicott and I could do this night, we went back the way we had come, and got away and down to Ezra Bradford's cabin without interference.

Now I had news for Will Endicott as to two things; and one was, that, this being a Monday, the day set for the wedding — if it could be called that — was but five days away, on the coming Saturday; and the other thing was, that I had sworn to Mary Vane never to quit this island again without her. Will Endicott would be reconciled to neither of these things, but had to be as to the latter, when he found there was no moving me.

In the end, I tarried with good friend Bradford, and Will Endicott went back alone to the boat. But, briefly, it was agreed, the ketch should come back the first night that would permit of it, but in no event later than Friday, if the wind served that evening, not to leave all to the venture of the last night. Will Endicott gripped me hard at leaving, and bade me be of good heart and have a care not to be seen of Vane's men; and, it seems, the wind holding all night, they did beat back to the rock easily before day-break.

I lay close all the next day at Ezra Bradford's; nor did Mary Vane come near the cabin. But I got word to her once through Ezra Bradford's boy, and learned she could scarce venture forth anywhere alone, and not for any distance. But she was clever in her own way, too, matching her wit against theirs; and she set about fooling Elias with fairer looks and prettier words than he had had from her before, so that he was foolishly elated and boasted to Vane of it.

By this, toward nightfall, she had laughingly told Elias she would gather some sprigs of the dogwood that grew by the clearing, and would fetch them in to him to hang about the walls. So she came, all unmolested, and walked to and fro for a little while past where I lay hidden, I having made bold to get there early, by way of the banks of the stream.

I bade her make as merry evenings as could be, with Vane and Will Lewis and the others, and to see they did drink her health not a little; but to urge that the other men come not about the house, to disturb them, but stay at

their own quarters. And when we should come for her, she would know it as early as we were landed and were near, by three cries of a night bird which Tom Appleton would give; and that, when we were ready for her, there would be one more cry close at hand. But she should wait some time after that, not to arouse the men to suspicion. Then, presently, she should come out at the door at the front of the cabin and run for the great gate; and we would be at hand and give our own account of things after that. Moreover, the first night that served us with a breeze would be the one.

"But, oh! Philip," she faltered, "I be trembling now, with the very thought of it; and I fear I may not run far, but be faint; and they will give you no mercy. And 'twill be worse with you dead, than though I went with Elias willingly."

"If I must be dead," I answered, "I swear so shall Elias be. But 'twill be better than that, and you will be brave. Do but get only into the dooryard, and you shall go the rest of the way with Will Endicott and me."

For all that, she was sobbing bitterly as she went away; and it did seem a foolhardy thing, at best, but there was no other way that I had wit enough to contrive.

I was never so low in courage, nor ever such a prey to foreboding as on the next day; for there blew an exceedingly heavy wind from the southeast and bore the seas crashing in upon the rocks of Round House. So that lying hidden in Ezra Bradford's cabin, I could see in my mind's eye, as on the night of the wreck when Will Endicott was saved, the froth and frenzy at the base of the great

cliffs. And lo! all my dear hopes were hurled in, as a ship wantoned by the waves, and wrecked and shattered and ground into sea-drift.

This storm lasted Wednesday and Thursday, and I feared it might be of long duration; but, praise God! it fell away Thursday night, so that the sea diminished the day of Friday. That night the sky was clearing, though with flying clouds bewildering it, and the seas running very easily and the wind not bad.

So, when the sun had gone beyond the distant mainland I was down by the shore, straining my eyes, looking out to sea, through the reach; and once I thought, in a transient illumining of the waters by the clouds breaking, that I saw the ketch — and was beside myself; but I saw it not again until it came all at once, unexpectedly, into sight from behind the little island. Then it lay into the wind and the anchor went down.

Presently they came in, cautiously, in two boats, Tom Appleton and Will Endicott in one, and Elbridge Carver and Randlett and Pemberton in the other.

Right glad was I to have them all on Round House. Nor were ever men better equipped for fighting, they having, one and all, their belts stuck as full of pistols as they would hold, and each, two or more good knives; and big Will Endicott, the jewelled dagger, which was a rare good weapon for any man, and he a rare good man for any weapon.

Now when we had sat us down for a moment, I told them that friend Ezra Bradford and his boy would aid us. This, not at close hand, since they had no fancy for going

away with us, but meant to stay and live on the island, and would not have the men in the stockade know their part in what should take place. But they were now over toward the southern shore of the island and, when they should hear shots fired, they would answer with firing from that quarter, to deceive the men into thinking there was a party of us over that way and so lead some of them, at least, astray. The Bradfords would do no more, but would get back to their cabin in a roundabout way, unobserved; which would profit us, as I say, to make a division of Vane's forces.

When the time should come, Elbridge Carver and Will Cole's two men, they being the three fleetest, should go straight down the hill to the shore of the reach, firing as they ran, but not stopping to fight; while Will Endicott and Tom Appleton and I, with Mary Vane, should go in by the path and down along the stream.

So at this, the other three taking one of the boats down to the pirates' landing to leave near there, Will Endicott and Tom Appleton and I went along up the edge of the ravine through the woods, slowly, till the others overtook us; and then we all went ahead at good speed, it being not more than a few minutes after nine o'clock.

Then, when we were, say, a quarter of a mile away from the stockade, we paused a moment for Tom Appleton to give the signal that I had promised; and those three weird cries had never sounded so fearful to me before, knowing as I knew now, what they would mean to Mary Vane; and the palms of my hands that clutched suddenly at the knife in my belt were dripping wet.

We went on, then, to the edge of the clearing and crept out, one by one, along the ground, to the very palisades of the stockade, and heard, indistinctly, the sounds of men's voices. I went over the stockade where Will Endicott and I had gone before, and, in a moment, he and Tom Appleton followed. The others crept along the outside toward the front wall, to wait, as we had planned.

When we three had got to the corner of the shed and peered around, we found the rear door of Vane's cabin shut — and Mary Vane had made it fast; but the door at the front was, it would seem, ajar; and we found it so, as we crept along in the shadow of the stockade to where we could see. Also, the great entrance gate of the stockade was not shut; and there lolled a fellow on a bench beside it, with a musket across his knees, and his head sunk on his breast.

For, this night before the great day to come was no light one with Vane's men; and away from the two houses where the most of them were lodged came the welcome sounds of their carousing, and once clearly, of brawling and blows struck; for they were never long desisting from that when the liquor was flowing free.

Then Tom Appleton and I, together, — but Will Endicott was too big not to be remarked upon, — strode boldly out toward the great gate, while Will crept along on hands and knees close to the logs. Tom Appleton went on one side, and I the other, as though we belonged there and were Vane's men; but unsteady on our legs, and lurching, as with too much drink.

So we got close upon the guard, who was no man we

had ever seen, but a villainous fellow Vane had shipped on his last voyage.

He paid little heed to us, so that Tom Appleton, darting in on him quickly, got him by the throat before he could cry out; and, at that, I had him doubled up with a blow in the pit of the stomach — which be not fair fighting, with a fair opponent, but it did the work for us. Then, with Will Endicott running up, we had the fellow bound and gagged and lugged out of the gate before he had his dull eyes half-opened.

At this, the others came in at the gate with us. Tom Appleton sat himself down on the very bench where the fellow had been on guard, laid a musket across his knees, and, when we had placed ourselves as we wished, gave again the signal. But this, the night being treacherous with sudden glimpses of the moon, not until we had seen the light blotted out behind a great patch of cloud; and, by that time, Will Endicott had fetched up a huge piece of the stick of a small boat, like the boom of a pinnace — and no other man could have carried it as he did.

He stood by the door with that, on one side, and I on the other; so close that when Tom Appleton gave the cry I could see within through the crack of the door. And gaunt, red-eyed Will Lewis, stepping across the room, started at it, and then fell to laughing over the thing.

“ Ho ! ho ! ” he roared. “ To be frightened at a bird ! Aye, a fool bird, Dan. Will I be fit, think, to go along South ever again, by the track of the galleons, and a screeching bird sets me jumping like a fish to bait ? ”

“ You be a drunken fool, Will.” It was Dan-o'-the-

Ship's voice that made answer, though I could not see him for Will Lewis's shutting out all else. Then he added, "I think Elias here will be the man —"

But no more of that did I hear. For now, a slim, light figure came between Will Lewis and the door, darted out of the entrance, sprang from the stoop down into the door-yard — and then, wild with fright and the madness of the thing, cried out, as I had never heard before; a shrill, piercing scream of terror, that rang from one end of the stockade to the other. And Ezra Bradford and his boy heard it from afar.

I swung the heavy plank door shut. Will Endicott lifted the great boat's stick, planted it against the door and braced it with tremendous strength. Then he and I darted after the fleeing figure, snatched up Mary Vane, one on either side, and, with Tom Appleton going along with us, we made off across the clearing for the woods. Mary Vane, even then, gasping for breath, did beg forgiveness for the cry she had uttered, fearing it had undone us; and she cried out, one moment, for us to go on and save ourselves, and, the next, clung to us, terrified, and begged we would not leave her to the men of the stockade and Elias.

"Why, lass," exclaimed Will Endicott, "'twas well timed, I do think, and may serve us better than silence. Since, by the Lord! it did frighten me as I never was frightened before. 'Twill give them some shock, too, like enough, at the outset, and put them into worse confusion."

Looking back now, we saw, dimly, Elbridge Carver and Randlett and Pemberton running down the hill; and,

presently, the three fired a pistol-shot, each, back at the stockade. Then the men came running out, and fired after them, and went running in pursuit. At this, the moon shone very bright for a moment; but whether we were seen or not, we did not know, and only went on as fast as we could, and got quickly to the shelter of the woods. About that time, we heard the shots from Ezra Bradford and his boy, and hoped they might serve to divert the pursuit.

We did get, too, even as far as the stream and a way along its windings without harm, nor heard the sound of any one following. But soon Will Endicott brought us to a halt to listen.

“I think there will be some one coming, through the woods, a little way back,” he said; and, listening, it was not to be mistaken. Then we pushed on again, but paused, a little farther down, and looked back again along the path by the stream. There was one spot, at a pretty swinging of the floss, where a little space of the woods lay open for the moonlight to play on, like the light thrown to one spot from a ship’s lantern; and three men, one following another, came quickly across this cleared place and were shown in relief against the blackness of the encompassing woods. The foremost man was George Rawlins; the second, Lawrence Sylvester; the third, unknown to us.

Will Endicott would have me go forward, with Mary Vane; and with some breaking of the branches and a little of such disturbance, that the men who followed might be hot-headed with the sound and thinking not of ambus-

cade. And he and Tom Appleton lurked by the path, hidden, one on either side, as we went on.

It seemed scarce a moment more when a horrid sound of struggling and sudden outcry, and the voices of men taken all unawares and met with the sting of death were borne on to us, so that Mary Vane sank down, trembling; then I could not wait with her, but darted back upon the path. Yet, I got not to where my comrades had stood, for the fight there was even now over and ended; and the two foremost men lay stricken in the path. The other had fled off through the woods so fast that Will Endicott and Tom Appleton would waste no time in pursuit of him, but were running along the path to meet me.

They were untouched, the men being fallen upon ere they could draw and fire; and there was that upon the blade of Will Endicott's dagger that was brighter than the gleaming rubies in its hilt, and had been more precious, a thousand-fold, to him in whose veins it had flowed, than all the blood-red rubies of the earth.

We lifted up Mary Vane and pushed on, very desperate, being fearful lest the man that had escaped might fetch others to follow, or intercept us. Indeed, we heard the sound of firing in the direction he had taken, as though he were giving alarm.

But, even upon this, there came a grievous hurt to me, through the root of a tree twisting up into the path. It caught me by a foot and wrenched it sorely; so that when I set weight upon it, it gave under me, with exquisite pain, and I was tumbling headlong. Then Will Endicott, seeing I was thus stricken like a hamstrung horse, lifted me up

bodily and threw me over his shoulder like a meal-sack, and made little more of my weight than he would have of the other.

We got down, without more misadventure, to the point where the little floss fell precipitously into the ravine; and there, only a rod away, stood the rude thing that had been a place of warmth and shelter to us in the days we had dwelt here on Round House, the cabin Tom Appleton and Elbridge and I — aye, and even Elias — had builded together.

Here, there being a path down along the face of the ravine, in through the underbrush, known of old to us, and which would, moreover, be sheltered from sight all the way, Will Endicott put me down and bade me wait till he and Tom Appleton should help Mary Vane along the ravine to the shore. This would be a matter of ten minutes, or a little more, when they would return and fetch me.

When they had been gone half this time, I pulled myself up and leaned against a tree, straining my ears to catch any sound from afar off, or near, that might tell where the men were. There was, too, sound of firing somewhere down along the reach. It seems, Elbridge Carver and the other two had got safely to their boat, and, moreover, had taken away the oars of one they found there belonging to Vane's men; and the men of the stockade, or a part of them, had come down to the shore and now stood there, firing, but missed their mark in the half-obsured and shifting light of the moon.

This firing, the sounds of it coming to me from a dis-

tance, did, in truth, put me all out of mind of nearer trouble; so that now, there leaping all unexpectedly out of the thicket the thin flame of a pistol-shot, with the puffing of smoke, and the crashing of the report in my ears, I was cruelly astounded and stunned for the moment, and could scarce find wit to grasp its meaning. Yet the next instant, it was very clear to me; for there burst out of the thicket the man that had fired. It was Elias; and but for the tremor of his hand with rage, which be ever a bad thing for the nerves, and most unsteady, he had shot me through; for he had crept up so that he was but a few feet away.

Now I was a man halt and stricken to the spot where I stood, by reason of having only one good leg to bear me; and I think, by my not springing forth to meet him, nor moving from the support of the tree, Elias thought me hit; and he came on, without waiting to load again. But when he was up to me, I had quickly my arms about him, like a brother. Yet, if our embrace were brotherly, it was like unto that of the first two in all the world, and one of us should die at the end of it.

It was thus that we two that had played together once upon a time should part now to the end of all things, and say no word each to the other in all our struggling — having no words to express what was in our hearts, and little breath to utter them. For I was clasping him now, and his arms were about me; and his hand was at my throat, and mine at his; and again and again a hand that would reach for the knife at the belt was held with firm clutch, it being the very hold on the life itself that each held dear.

I, hobbling, was not to be shaken off; and he was wrenching and wresting to be free, like one that hath been seized, all unexpected, by the arms of the sea-devil.

Now we toppled and swayed, he dragging and I clutching, amid the underbrush and the growth of alder and the wiry vines that clawed us with tiny, myriad claws. We reeled and fell, and rolled among these till our faces were rasped and bloody; and he dragged me up with him.

But then I was in some way caught by the tangled growth, so that there shot so keen a pain through me as though a knife-blade had gone from the ankle, that was wrenched, all the way up the leg to the body. It thrilled through and through me, and my hold upon Elias was broken — torn away. He sprang back, sneering, gasping, furious; wild to know now that he might have me at his mercy, seeing I were lame and crippled. So stood I, waiting.

Then there, before my eyes, was the sharp way of providence made manifest; and to this day I do thank God it was not given to me to be the instrument of its working. For, by our grappling and falling, and struggling here and there, we were even now upon the brink of the great ravine; and neither of us thinking of that, it being shut out as with a screen by the green branches.

Now, the man before me, reaching for his weapon, did of a sudden sink down like one that hath naught but the quicksands of the shore beneath his feet. Yea, as the Scriptures have it, the very earth staggered like a drunken man. A slice of the bank whereon he stood was riven off, it being all specious atop with shrubs and bushes, but this a snare — and it was honeycombed and eaten away

underneath, and but a treacherous shelf. This, I say, with the bushes that grew upon it, and Elias, clutching madly, stupidly, at them, wrenched now away, tore off and fell, down, down, into the ravine — and naught to break the fall for a hundred feet, to where the jagged rocks lay below, only surface-clad with seaweed; where the swash of the tide wetted the rocks; where the waters thereof now leaped all about and over the senseless thing that had been Elias, and washed away the life-blood as it flowed from his pale face.

Now were Tom Appleton and Will Endicott helping me down this same ravine; and we must stay not to lift Elias from the flowing of the sea, but go on and on, carefully, painfully, down to the shore and so into the boat, where Mary Vane was waiting.

Now, quick and strong, out upon the reach, half-moonlit, half-darkened; across the flickering, fleeting patches of gleaming water; mid darting light and blackness. And lo! ahead in the shadow of the little island, lay the other boat, with Elbridge Carver and the other two, all unhurt; and we were going on, thus, out of the reach and on to the ketch that lay swinging with the tide.

But there came stealing swiftly out now from the shore and up the reach, following us, a boat with two men in her; and coming thus silently and stealthily within gunshot, they swung their boat broadside and blazed away, each with a musket, and, following this, with pistols. So there hissed and hummed in our ears the sharp zing of the bullets; and heavy swan-shot, also, cut the waters about us; and one rattled against an oar blade. But of this

trick, there was one shot, and one only, that went home; another, that would be the death-shot of him who fired it. And by the first, our good man, Randlett, whom we had come, indeed, to fancy greatly, and who had served us true, did roll over upon the gunwale.

“Black Dan!” he said, feebly. “I be done for.”

He was dead in the boat the next minute — and we buried him two miles off Round House that night, with a shot at his heels, to let him lie still on the sea’s bed, not to wander, tide-driven.

The other shot of which I did speak tore across Will Endicott’s cheek, and made the red blood flow, but did him no hurt. Yet it did light again the fire in his eyes that a man might dread to see; and he was overboard, silently, and swimming along the shore of the reach, far in the wake of the boat wherein Dan Baldrick — he that was, too, Captain John Vane — and Will Lewis now were putting quickly back. Like a great seal went Will Endicott, noiselessly, without splashing; moving his powerful arms under the water, and only his dark head showing to us, as we waited on our oars for what should come, since he had bade us lie safe with Mary Vane, and not follow.

Clear across the reach went Will Lewis and Dan Baldrick; and we saw their figures vaguely, dimly, as they drew the boat out upon the shore, and stood there for a moment, looking off and wondering, perchance, what stayed us.

But Will Endicott we had lost to view; till all at once there came a cry across the waters, and the two leaped and turned as though they had heard a sound behind them.

The figure of a third man darted out, and then all the three blended indistinctly together; a black mass, that swayed and writhed in the obscurity; separated; came together again; reeled; fell; rose again; changed its form into fantastic shapes, all shadowy, before our eyes — and then, lo! it did define itself a little, and there was one man standing alone by the water's edge, and none other by.

Then, stooping, this figure — a huge one — dragged again the boat to the water, put it afloat, leaped in and came out to us; and he that had been Dan Baldrick and he that had been gaunt Will Lewis lay dead upon the shore for the men of the stockade to bury.

The ledges that girt Round House, shaggy with their coats of seaweed, and the rocks rising out of the sea, and the tree-clad hills, fade quickly out of view. For the ketch is flying swiftly now, far beyond the swash of the waves upon the shingle and the stone, out of sound of the tinkle and splash of the floss, dripping down the ravine, never to be heard again by us; out of the sight and sound of the sea-jumble at the foot of the great cliffs. And Mary Vane, falling away to sleep soon, worn and weary, with some one's arms about her, shall awaken again, out of the sight and harm of pirate men.

Now, as I sit here, writing, this be the blending of spring into joyous summer. From the window, open wide to the songs of birds and the sunshine, I see, away under the hill, the river Charles, flowing smoothly on its way to the

bay where many green islands are; and the memory of a day, long ago, when the banks were blackened with a multitude eager to see poor, sinful men go up to die, be softened and much erased by sweeter, fairer things.

There was much I fain would have told — and thought, when I began, to do so — of the voyage we made from Round House to the mainland; and thence along southward to where we went ashore and buried most of the treasure that was aboard the ketch; and how we went our way in, by the old, familiar thoroughfares, to Boston harbour; and how we found many things there changed; and Ephraim aging a little with more of rust in his bones; and Mercy no longer abiding with him save in the spirit, but called away and sleeping her last sleep, very quietly for her. And Ephraim would not call her back, even if he could, to the trials of this world, for her own good, he bearing her loss resignedly.

This, and how we went later for the treasure and brought it in, from time to time, not daring to fetch it all at once, lest we be hanged, too, for piracy, by men who might misjudge us. All these and many other things I would have set down at greater length; but, indeed, I reckoned not that I had voyaged so far and wide when I did set out, two score and more months ago, to tell of it. And I was thinking, as I sat here, of the port now not far away to fetch up in, as sailors do after the voyage has been long, when there came in to me, gently, she that once was Mary Vane, and put an arm about my shoulder and laid her cheek softly against mine.

Now Mary Vane, that was, be, indeed, no longer the

little maid that steered the pinnace and guided us in along the shore of the reach to harbour; for the golden hair be not all golden now. Yet the deep, true, brown eyes be the same; and the love-light in them burns bright as of long ago; and, about her neck, there is a golden chain from which a locket hangs. In it, there be a face that is hers and not hers, but that we shall both love for all time.

And she doth take the pen from out my fingers, growing weary, and bids me write no more of bloody deeds and cruel men, and things that should now be forgotten and forgiven; and, since it be these two score years since first I did her bidding, I think, in truth, it will be too late now to begin to disobey.

THE END.

L. C. Page and Company's Announcement List of New Fiction

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